ON THE INDIAN HILLS;

OR,

COFFEE-PLANTING IN SOUTHERN INDIA.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ON THE INDIAN HILLS.

CHAPTER I.

AT WORK.

After a very pleasant stroll round D——'s clearings, and imbibing much useful information, we finally got back to the bungalow; and I shook hands with my courteous host, and set out for my own estate, under the guidance of a swarthy, short, curly-headed native, looking like an aboriginal Australian, who had been sent to show me the way to Pardagherry. We wound along by the side of a shallow stream for three or four miles; the road, well made and broad, running under continual avenues of trees, and crossing the bed of the stream once or twice by very solidly built bridges; until we came out into the open again, and a wide expanse of mature coffee lay before, with a clean white

bungalow standing on a knoll nearly in the centre of the clearing, shadowed by two graceful palm trees—the only ones on these hills. As the road ran close by, I dropped in to make the acquaintance of the superintendent, and found him and his assistant hard at work over accounts. They were naturally astonished at the sudden appearance of a new "pale face," and it was necessary to explain who I was, when C. H——, the chik-doree, and W——, the superintendent, welcomed me cordially to the jungles. The assistant assured me that the vilest of Irish mud hovels was a paradise compared to the place I was going to, and painted the discomforts of jungle life in glowing terms, ending up with the ironical hope that I should be comfortable; so, with a promise to drop in at his bungalow some day and let him know what my quarters proved like, I marched forward again.

Another estate was passed, which at first I took to be my own, but my guide led the way through it along the top of a ridge of mountain planted on both sides with coffee, and again we descended into a valley and left the cleared ground behind us. Here the vegetation

appeared more dense and matted than farther to the north, great creepers swinging from tree to tree, while long rattan canes—a hundred springing from one root—climbed hither and thither, and overhung the road in festoons. Here, too, the pathway—for it was no longer a made road—ran along the top of a ridge, and although the valleys on either side were not discernible, the trees had clearly felt the influence of the wind; for there were many dead trunks lying about in all stages of decay, with green moss spreading a pall over them, and pale, scentless white orchids shooting up, fresh and beautiful, from the rotten wood.

After we had done a couple of miles along this road, a strange figure was seen coming down the path, and I was soon after confronted by Mr. R——, the superintendent of the company's estate where I was going to work. A very old hand himself at coffee planting, and a dweller all his life in wild regions, he had become a regular backwoodsman, and had discarded as superfluous many of the refinements of civilization. Imagine an old grey-headed man, his chin and cheeks, long unacquainted with the razor, sharp black eyes long accustomed to

look on nothing but obsequious natives, and a form bent with fever and hill-climbing, equipped in a loose and not particularly new suit of dark green cloth, white leather leggings, a broad-brimmed hat of coarse rice straw, and a heavy stick to lean upon. Such was my associate when he first presented himself to my sight, and after making each other's acquaintance, he retraced his steps, and together we proceeded to the settlement. This we were not long in reaching, and the ideas I had formed of an encampment in embryo were rudely shaken. Dim notions had floated through my head of shady fig trees, with wide-spreading branches, and white tents under their shelter, with rows of neat native huts down by a neighbouring stream half hidden in verdant cool foliage, with horses and cattle grazing *ad libitum*, and laughing children and noisy dogs to welcome the traveller; but the reality was sadly otherwise. The ridge along which we had been passing grew rapidly narrower, and began to slope downwards, while daylight and patches of blue sky showing through the trees on either side, indicated that we were passing along the centre of a narrow strip or belt of forest, which had been

left when the clearings were made upon either side. As the pathway sloped more and more downwards, the soil had been washed off by the heavy rains rushing to the nearest watercourse, leaving the matted roots of the tall trees above ground everywhere exposed, and making a wild entanglement which in places formed rude steps, of which we took advantage, and in others arches and lacework of timber which it required care to thread without tripping. At the bottom of the hill we came suddenly in view of the "settlement." Totally different from what I had expected, it looked like nothing so much as a wild African village, such as that noble explorer, Stanley, has described and figured many times in his "Travels in the Dark Continent." The underwood had been cut down, together with a few of the most inconveniently placed trees, and in the rough clearing thus formed (all bristling with stumps and remains of bushes) half a dozen low reed-thatched hovels had grown up a little below an isolated residence, which, though of exactly the same construction as the others, seemed a trifle more carefully finished. This latter was our temporary home, and arriving in the rudely built verandah,

R—— bade me "welcome to the greenwood," and told me we should have to make ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit, until a slack time in the coffee planting gave us an opportunity to build pucka bungalows.

Certainly there was not very much to boast of in my new quarters. R——'s hut was about thirty feet long by twelve broad, and was divided in two by a chinky partition of Palghaut mats. One half which abutted on the path by which we had approached was the dining-room, and for its sole furniture boasted a round table, a meat-safe with shelves and wire gauze to keep out flies and slugs, and a strong lock and key to keep out the "boys." The available space which these left was further diminished by a heavy iron safe, a stove with an exceedingly obtrusive chimney, and two or three chairs. The owner pointed out with great pride that the floor was not the actual surface of the soil, which had been smoothed and covered with rough-sawn boards laid side by side on it. He also begged me to notice that we had entered by glass folding-doors, which, though they would not close tightly, had been fixed up as a temporary arrangement,

and he considered them extremely luxurious. The construction of the hut itself was very primitive, as I took in at a glance. Four strong forked poles had been driven in at the corners, and young saplings, roughly lopped and trimmed, had been placed on them. Upon these the roof had been constructed with a very steep pitch to throw off the heavy monsoon rainfall, and had been thickly thatched with pale yellow lemon-grass from the neighbouring hillside. But though the roof was substantial enough, the sides of the hut were fragility itself. A few stout stakes had been driven in at equal distances, and to these Palghaut mats were fastened with split rattan creepers; but, as there was only a single thickness of matting, daylight came in at a hundred places, and the green and yellow stains down the inside showed that they made no pretence of being watertight. Besides this, some one seemed to have been in a fidgety mood with the stove, which had been moved round and round the room—perhaps according to the changes of the wind—but wherever it went a hole had had to be cut in the side of the hut that the chimney might reach the outer air, and as the stove moved on these holes had

been filled up with any material at hand—straw, sacking, or even brown paper. I asked R—— how it was he had not managed to make himself more comfortable, but he said it had been impossible up to the present time. The company at home were anxious to get as much coffee planted as possible, and labour being scarce and hard to get so deep as this in the jungles, all hands needed to be kept constantly employed in out-of-door work, leaving no time for building operations. Our sleeping quarters were even more cramped, there being three beds side by side across the division, and a washing-stand made out of an old box taking up all the remaining space. By way of decoration, the walls of the hut were hung with a wonderful collection of articles, guns, sword-bayonets, tin buckets, a side of bacon, several squirrel and monkey skins, dried fish, a few young coffee plants strung up by their roots, old clothes, hats, etc. Altogether, this sample of a coffee planter's hut (the sort of thing every one who opens up a new estate for himself must put up with for a time) was most Robinson Crusoe-like and romantic to those who could look at it in such a light. Having somewhat shaken down

and despatched a fair breakfast, at which curry made of goat's flesh was the chief dish, we were joined by Mr. R——'s son "Charlie," a pleasant English-looking boy of about sixteen, who had been out to shoot a pigeon with a long, heavy Snider smooth-bore, which, though rusty, has killed a fine bison lately.

We subsequently made a tour of inspection of that division of the property on which the settlement stands. The whole estate is divided into two portions, separated by a narrow stream. The most southerly is the "Mary Anne Forest," consisting of 1118 acres of virgin jungle, the home of the bison and elephant, untouched and unexplored since the world began, except by aboriginal tribes, to whom it is a veritable happy hunting ground. The more northerly division consists of a thousand acres, and goes by the name of Pardagherry, meaning in Tamil the "New Rock," from some patches of bare stone which crop up in conspicuous places. There are thus in our charge over two thousand acres of the finest coffee land in the south of India, and being a new district, we hope it will prove free from the disease and "bug," those fatal bars to the prosperity of many an estate in

Ceylon. Of course, to open all this extent of land at once would not be possible, but as the cultivated area grows gradually in size, the owners should possess a very valuable property, the more so as they obtained a grant of it, only a short time ago, at a nominal price from the Raja of Cochin. But that time has passed away, and the arrival of several fresh Englishmen up here, carrying with them, as they always do, a tide of energy and prosperity, has awakened the Raja to the value of his unexplored dominions; so now any one who wishes to start an estate must purchase the soil and have it surveyed by a Government official. Still, I think the Cochin authorities would do well to encourage the settling of Europeans in the jungles, and should be careful not to fix the price of land too high, nor to dispose of huge slices of the best soils to any one individual or company. English energy, backed up by gold, can do anything. On all the Government maps of a few years ago, the site of our clearings was put down as "impenetrable jungle," and yet the soil was no sooner found suitable to coffee, than the "Britishers" broke through all barriers, laughed to scorn the "impenetrableness" of these

unknown wilds, and made roads through the densest parts, establishing themselves firmly; so that probably, before many years, what was once the lonely home of the wild elephant may become a flourishing settled district.

Thus far, our part towards this end consists in having traced the "Top Entrance Road," as our survey names it, though it is more properly a bridle path, but at present our only link with the other states and civilization. Besides this, during the two years he has been at work here, R—— has felled, cleared, and planted the best part of one hundred and thirty acres of land, and made and established two "nurseries" for rearing the young plants from the seeds. The ground already planted is, roughly speaking, in the shape of a parallelogram, its greatest length being from north to south. Through the centre runs a ridge with a belt of forest still standing along the top, and down this leads our main thoroughfare. The ground sloping away on the westward of the ridge is divided in two parts by another broad belt, which sweeps right down the slope to the margin of a mountain stream, about twenty feet wide, which we flatter with the name of the Manalora river.

This stream curiously rises on the very brink of the precipices which overlook the great Palghaut plain, but instead of descending to the northward, a chance fall in the hillside leads its course to the southward, so that it winds its way through the jungle and passes our estate, and, after receiving many mountain torrents, grows into a veritable river, and finally reaches the sea far to the southward in the neighbourhood of Cochin. On the other side of the rising ground which forms the backbone of the land already planted, the land trends down to the bed of a small nullah, and is cleared for a little distance up the opposite slope, when it is again bounded by primitive jungle and rises rapidly to a high ridge, called the "Poothapara Thund," on the far slope of which all is grass and an excellent place for bison and elephants. This side is also divided into two parts by a belt of about two chains in breadth. There are thus four separate clearings: No. 1 of fifty-six acres, No. 2 of twenty-two acres, both on the western side; No. 3 of thirty-six acres, and No. 4 of fourteen acres, on the eastern half. This arrangement will be found a very convenient one as a beginning on new estates.

With regard to the best size for clearings, there are many different opinions. One set of planters hold that large fields are much superior for many reasons. They maintain that if you have nothing less than fifty acres in extent, you enjoy freedom from the hosts of weeds which grow in the jungle, you are less troubled by harmful insects which love the shade and shelter of trees and undergrowth, and they think such clearings are more convenient and better managed. But the other side say that by making small plantations and leaving plenty of timber, you gain great shelter from high winds—a thing of considerable importance to coffee, especially in its young state—you have great stores of leaf mould within easy distance for using as manure, and they argue that, notwithstanding insects and weeds, the coffee thrives better than in the open. Probably the best size of clearing will vary with the conditions and aspect of the estate. On windy ridges such as this, where the young plants are liable to feel the full force of either monsoon, protection of some sort seems imperative, and none is so convenient and lasting as leaving "belts" or strips of jungle unfelled when the

clearings are first made. These wind-shields should not be less than two chains through, or they will not answer their purpose; nor more, or they will take up too much valuable land. As it is, the strip along the top of our ridge and the two others running at right angles to it occupy thirty acres of our ground which might be bearing coffee, but it has been wisely devoted to its present purpose.

During our walk round the estate, undertaken after breakfast to show me the boundaries, we came upon a gang of forty coolies making a way through the north-easterly clearing for the greater convenience of weeding operations, which are in full swing about this time, and it was astonishing to see how quickly the work was done when there was some one by to keep the men up to the mark. When we scrambled down to them, the road had just got clear of the fallen timber of the enclosure, and was to take a slant upwards (the course having been previously set out with pegs by R——) until it penetrated through the jungle and ran into the "Top Entrance Road." Apparently the coolies had been taking it easily while the superintendent was away at his hut breakfasting, for

he went down amongst them and began abusing them right and left in Tamil, supplementing his abuse by an occasional prod or two with his stick in the ribs of the most sleepy. There were about forty men present, and certainly under his eyes they progressed at a wonderful rate. In front of us was a dense clump of tall bamboos, the growth of many a year, and as this blocked up our way it had to come down. First, ten coolies with axes set to work on it, and one after another the green reed-like stems were cut through and brought low. Four minutes sufficed for this, and then the billhook and mamooty men, *i.e.* coolies with instruments like spades having the blade bent at right angles to the shaft, marched to the attack. In a couple of minutes the roots and stumps were hacked into bits and thrown aside, and another minute sufficed for the spademen to smooth the earth; and then the road went triumphantly forward across the place where but a short time before the bamboos had been masters. Next we came to a couple of small trees and a tangle of rattan creepers, which all followed the bamboos—the axe and bill men going first, slashing and hacking frantically,

and the rest coming after. This is what we call a dug-out road; that is to say, the hillside being very steep, soil is shovelled away from the upper part and placed on the lower side till the road comes level. Thus there is a perpendicular wall on one hand and a steep scarp on the other, and being smoothed, the fresh red soil looks neat and nice, but requires some time to settle down. At first, owing to half the breadth being cut out of the solid, and half composed of loose soil, it is apt to sink on the outer side and has to be repaired. A little further on we came to a thicket of kewra bushes, where the hillside was so steep it was difficult to keep one's footing. These plants, which are a variety of those which grow in the lowlands, have a bare brown stem five and six feet long, and a crown of sabre-like leaves with edges sharp as knives and indented by numerous sawlike teeth. A thicket of such is practically impenetrable, and the coolies came to a stop on the outskirts, but the road had to go forward in spite of difficulties. So R—— took a bill and I took an axe, and led the attack. Being clothed, we got on better than our men, who were not; but my hands

were considerably cut and full of thorns and prickles by the time we reached the other extremity of the barrier, while the poor coolies with bare legs and feet must have had a bad passage.

In this way we made rapid progress all the afternoon, until our watches told us it was past five o'clock, the usual hour for striking work, when we retraced our steps to the huts, and a great bell was rung, suspended from two trees directly in front of our verandah, as the signal for the coolies to cease work all over the estate.

Presently they came trooping in, men, women, and children, in long lines from various points of the estate, with their tools across their shoulders, and their thin brown forms wrapped close in cumblies or the native shawls of the district; and as they arrived took up a position two deep on a patch of cleared ground just below the bungalow. Here they formed a great hollow square, and after allowing time for stragglers to come in, R—— put a great day-book under his arm and marched into their midst, like the recording angel, to set down the day's work before the darkness fell. He pro-

ceeded to call over names, and each one who had been working all day was expected to answer "Here!" and, after depositing the tools he had been using, would be free to depart to the lines. The appellatives, Tamil, Canarese, Hindustani, and Malayalim, all mixed up and following each other in rapid succession, were wonderfully puzzling to pronounce, and I felt misgivings as to my success when this duty devolved upon my shoulders. R—— seemed perfectly at home amongst these outlandish designations, and rattled them off in a rapid manner, "Here!" "Here!" "Here!" following in rapid succession, and the circle getting thinner and thinner every moment. As each name in the book was called and answered to, a pencil mark was put down opposite it in another column, if the man or woman had worked a whole day; and by adding these up at the end of the week we could tell exactly how much was due to each person. Occasionally, however, the superintendent, who seemed to know every coolie on the place by sight, came to one who had been lazy during the day, and either refused to put him down at all, thereby depriving him of a day's pay, or only

entered him as having done six hours' work. Against this decision of the Englishman there was, of course, no appeal; so the responsibility was considerable, and all depended on the justice and accurate remembrance of the sahib. In one or two cases of poor creatures who got nothing, I fancied their fault was more owing to inability to toil than simply idleness; but it is always very hard to tell, and they must be kept up to the mark somehow or they would do no work. One or two of these latter hung about until roll call was over, and then tried hard to move the decision of the superintendent, or get him to put them down for at least half a day, saying that in an unfortunate moment they had laid aside their mamooty or axe, and just then the sahib, "whose generosity was boundless," had come up and fancied they had done nothing all day. But in most of these cases our generosity was limited by the stern necessity of making an example of some one occasionally, and the coolies had to go away without attaining their ends.

By this time the sun was going down, and its beams, which before had been so powerful, now came wandering through the forest, and tinged

all the tree trunks rosy red, throwing a strange, unnatural glow on everything. But the day's work was not yet done, for we had to count a couple of hundred dirty axes and tools, and lay aside those that needed repairing, afterwards locking up the storehouse which made one side of the square in which the coolies had mustered; and then returning to the bungalow to find half a dozen coolies squatting on their heels in the verandah. These were "medicine coolies," *i.e.* had come up to be doctored by R——, and in this very unpleasant work I assisted him. Half their maladies were directly due to want of cleanliness, and the remainder were owing to bad food or none at all. For instance, the first man drew off his cumbley at R——'s order, and showed his skin marked with the "itch" from head to foot—even while standing in front of us the poor fellow was in an agony of irritation—and we gave him some sulphur ointment in the top of a cocoanut shell which he had brought up for that purpose, and told him to rub it on, promising that he would be well in a couple of days; whereon he departed with a great sense of the sahib's wisdom. The next coolie had

his legs tied up in multitudinous wrappings, and when he had unwound these, he showed us six or seven great sores which were eating into his flesh and totally prevented his walking. We gave him lint and clean bandages, and told him to wash himself clean, and then we would do something more. Another one was just recovering from smallpox, and seemed very weak and ill. Two more felt the fever coming on, and wanted to be dosed with quinine, and another man had his foot swollen up to the size of a pumpkin by some poisonous thorn which we spent twenty minutes in hunting for—many times more unpleasant an operation than simply washing the feet of beggars, which some saints have got credit for. Having done our best for them all, the day's work was at last over, and we went into the hut, struck a light, and proceeded to wash and brush ready for dinner.

Our chief illumination was a large paraffin lamp, which we slung from a rafter overhead in the "sitting-room," and under the cheerful influence of this the strange little dwelling did not look at all uncomfortable, with a red curtain across the glass door, and all other

holes in the walls carefully stuffed up. We dined very contentedly, though my eyes were continually wandering to the bare grass roof, with its untrimmed rafters and long pendant cobwebs, and the mat walls with their strange collection of objects hung round them; and I could not help comparing it with the spacious silver-and-grey saloon of the *Almora*, in which I had so recently been dining. However, R—— assured me that when it began to rain again in a few days, as it would, we should find the place perfectly watertight—with perhaps the exception of one or two places in the walls—and he told me this was a great deal to be thankful for on a new estate, he having lived many a day under little more than an umbrella and a blanket. On "turning in," my thoughts were again led to the *Almora*, for I remembered with fond regret that delightfully soft silk-cotton mattress which used to form my couch every evening on deck under the pleasant white awning. But here my resting-place was constructed of three boards placed side by side on the tops of two empty wine cases. This was not all. I could have put up with sleeping on boards, but it was unkind

of fate to let the planks be of unequal thicknesses, so that, whichever way they might be arranged, there was always a fearfully sharp-edged ridge running down the centre. Above the bed-head there was a string with a peg fastened to it, and after wondering what this could be for, I came to the conclusion it was a bell that communicated with a little shed outside in which our cooking was done, and which we honoured with the name of kitchen; so I was on the point of pulling it by way of experiment, when "Charlie" in the next cot to mine called out, "Pray, don't pull that; it is an elephant gun—four bore—loaded up to the muzzle with powder and ball, and fixed to one of the trees outside about ten yards from your head!" "You don't say so?" I inquired with considerable interest. "And which way does it point?" But on Charlie's assuring me it pointed towards the jungle, I agreed to draw down the peg if there should be an alarm of elephants during the night, and fell to sleep meditating on this infernal machine.

It has always surprised me how soon one gets into new habits, and under what various circumstances the human machine will work.

For the first two or three days after my arrival it was only with the greatest difficulty I could rouse myself at the planter's hour of 5 a.m., but on the third or fourth day I woke up quite naturally some time before daybreak. One frequently reads that the early morning hours are the pleasantest of all in India; and so they may be down on the plains, where the mid-day sun is unbearably hot, but up here at this season they are decidedly raw and cold, with usually a thin drizzling mist or damp fog hanging about until the sun is up. Under such circumstances the planter turns out, and, after sounding the muster call on his great bell or gong, makes a hasty toilet and partakes of the invigorating hot coffee and toast which his "cook boy" has prepared. Then, as soon as the coolies, all swaddled up to their chins in blankets, have sauntered up to the open ground by his hut, he takes his memorandum book and goes down to divide them according to the work to be done. Twenty men, perhaps, under one maistry, are sent with axes and crow-bars to cut and move the logs from the line of a new road; ten or twelve more to weed the "nursery;" so many women and children,

under two or three overseers (they always want a lot of looking after), take baskets and hoes and depart to weed the coffee land already planted; some are sent to fetch grass, some to building, and so on. As each party goes down to the store to get the necessary tools, the assistant has to see that each one takes the right thing and only the right thing, and the building is full of coolies pushing, fighting, and quarrelling, some taking the wrong implements, and some none at all, in spite of vigorous endeavours to get things straight. Even when all the natives present at muster have been told off and started with their tools, the day's troubles are only beginning; for no sooner are they clear of the settlement and winding along the narrow jungle paths, than they make all sorts of attempts and "dodges" to escape and get back to their huts, hoping, by being present at the morning muster and again at evening roll-call, that their absence during the day will not have been noticed, and so they may get a day's pay for doing no work.

On the second day after my arrival, I was told off to conduct fifty women and girls about

half a mile away through the forest, to a new clearing that had just been made on the Poothopara Thund, and which we were planting with guinea-grass to be the feed of a future herd of cattle. I got my little convoy in order. After considerable trouble with one or two elderly females, who wanted to say their prayers under every fig tree we came to, and half a dozen coolie women with little children, who kept bolting into the jungle and had to be retrieved, we eventually reached our ground, and I forthwith arranged my workers in a long line and commenced operations. But although fifty had started, when I seized an opportunity of counting my forces I found there were only thirty-two present, and I had to go back to the settlement to find the remainder, and drive them before me. Getting back to the guinea-grass enclosure, which by the way was full of great crags of rock and huge fallen tree trunks, on counting the line, which had made very little progress since I left it, there were only twenty-nine women at work; so, hastily starting the contingent just brought up, I went in chase of the runaways, and after scrambling over rocks on hands and knees, and creeping in like

position under tree trunks, I found and drove in nearly all of them, many being placidly asleep with their sarees thrown over their heads. Even when in line they are very troublesome. While I was at one side of the clearing showing some brown-skinned damsel the right way to work, every one would sit down and chew betel-nut at the far extremity, and by the time I had got over there and had wrathfully upbraided the transgressors, I would look round and see the coolies just left chatting or stretching themselves meditatively! All this under a hot Indian sun was very severe work, especially for any one not accustomed to it, and yet it could not be avoided, though more experience would doubtless make me more skilful.

Then, too, the women are much more troublesome than the men. It is a mistake to think they are easily managed; and before I had been on the estate many days, I sincerely wished they were all away at their native villages in Mysore and Madura, with their troublesome children and squealing babies. But it always falls to the "chik doree's" share to look after them when he first begins his experiences, as their occupations are usually the humble weeding and

picking up sticks, while the men are engaged on more difficult tasks, which require more skilled supervision. Our principal occupation for some time was clearing this guinea-grass enclosure of the loose sticks and as many of the branches as were movable, and fetching the grass roots from W——'s estate, where there was a flourishing plantation much patronized by the sambour and other deer of the neighbourhood. As this was three miles away or more, the work was very tedious, my share of it being continually driving long lines of women and children backwards and forwards. One way they were light-hearted enough, and probably laughed and joked at my expense, though my ignorance of the language did not enable me to tell for certain. Perhaps that was as well; but coming home, each woman had a heavy load on her head, and each child a smaller one, and the path naturally seemed longer, while we were very much troubled by the leeches and flies. At the end of each double journey I really felt for my workers, who were weak and famine stricken; but there was no help for it, so the superintendent said, and three times every day we were expected to make the long gloomy

walk, over hill and dale, through the wet jungle. It was bad enough for me, who was well shod, well fed, and marched both ways without a load; it must have been grievous to many of my poor followers, whose bare feet and legs were exposed to leech-bites and thorns, and who had to make half their journeys under great loads of the pale green grass, which, by hanging down in front and behind, nearly enveloped several of the smaller carriers.

It may be wondered how I got on without any knowledge of the language. In truth, it was very difficult work, as my Hindustani was of little or no good; and I should have been in greater difficulties, but for the assistance of the maistries, one or two of whom always accompanied the parties; and knowing by experience what had to be done, they were able to direct their more ignorant countrymen and women, I meanwhile standing by, looking as wise as might be. These maistries, or head workmen, are much superior to their compatriots in every way. First of all, they are always dressed somehow or other; one of them would no more appear in public in the piece of string and rag of a coolie than an Englishman would. In this respect

they are very particular, and it gives them at once a great hoist above the lower grades. In their homes they are small farmers, and have come up to the jungles when the land is burned like a brick from long-continued drought, and their bullocks have died from want of grass. Moreover, many of them are men who have been born and lived on coffee estates all their lives, and these are of course the most valuable, owing to their experience, and because they have grown to know the ways of the Englishmen, and often even their language; though, unfortunately for me, none of ours had arrived at that degree of excellence. There was a half-caste, however, on the estate who spoke both Tamil and English, and he was of considerable use from his knowledge of the operations and of the native languages. He lived in a small hut by himself, between our bungalow and the coolie settlement, so that he was always at hand when wanted; and whenever R—— had a more than usually unpleasant job to be done, somebody was always sent to fetch the unfortunate "clerk," who got considerably more "kicks than halfpence." The position of these half-castes, who are very numerous all over the country,

must be difficult to support with dignity. Born of native women, sometimes the wives of European soldiers, they live between the races in every respect. In colour they are a yellowish white, with poor physiques and the sloping shoulders of the native, with the same strangely formed hands and fingers. Unfortunately, while they inherit the weak points of both breeds, they do not seem to be particularly strong in the virtues of either. It may not be their fault; it may be want of education and training; but, as they stand at present, they are scorned by the pure-blooded natives, over whom they attempt to tyrannize (which the natives strongly resist, as they feel none of the respect for them which they do for the sahib), and looked down on by the Englishmen with even more hauteur than would be shown to a native of pure blood. They are thus placed "between the devil and the deep sea," and associate with neither, keeping to themselves, and coddling their wrongs—a great pity, as they and their descendants are becoming very numerous. Our particular clerk, who held a position just above the first native maistry, was, on the whole, a fair sample of his kindred. Dressing in thin, threadbare black

clothes, cut on an English pattern (I fear his whole wardrobe), through all the worst of the wet monsoon, his poor battered white helmet and his thin-soled boots, which I fancy he kept on night and day, because he dared not take them off for fear of their coming to pieces, moved me to compassion. I have seen him, when the day's work was done, of which he had borne a big share with no chance of praise, steal away to his hut with the rain streaming down his clothes, and sit down to his miserable plate of boiled rice and fish; and in such a place! A low miserable shed, having a mud floor, and walls of rotten mats that emitted a sickening smell night and day, and a thin thatch roof that harboured all sorts of unclean insects. Amid such surroundings—with no education, no knowledge, and very little hope here or hereafter; despised by his inferiors, and scorned for the colour of his skin by his superiors—who shall blame him much if he drank deep wherever and whenever he could? In fact, it was his great failing, poor wretch! R—— told me that he gets so wild on the subject, that if he cannot beg, borrow, or steal arrack or brandy from high or low, he will come up to hospital and declare he

has a bad attack of cholera, in the hopes of getting hold of a bottle of chlorodyne; and should he succeed, goes away triumphantly and drinks it with his dinner, trying to think it is something stronger.

CHAPTER II.

JUNGLE DAYS.

THE rain came down with very little intermission during my first week—not the warm drizzle of an English autumn, but a cold shower-bath, night and day. Again and again we all got wet through, and as nothing could be dried, owing to the saturated condition of the atmosphere, my whole wardrobe rapidly emerged from the packing-cases, and, becoming wet, was in turn hung up to take care of itself round our walls. I changed my skin like a chameleon, and at last began to look anxiously for a break in the clouds, in order that I might dry some things; otherwise I should be reduced to the necessity of going weeding in evening dress, if things continued in this way much longer.

Every morning we rose at dawn, mustered

the coolies in a downpour, worked all day under the same conditions, and when the evening came released our men (always a long and tedious affair just when one feels most done up), and then betook ourselves to our reeking hut, where we dined in a vapour-bath of moisture condensed by our lamp. Then, after a pipe and reading a little, we betook ourselves to our bunks, and listened to the rain pattering overhead and the trees sighing with the wind that swept up the mountain gorges, until we dropped asleep.

One never knows what one can stand until the time comes to make the trial. In England I should have thought this sort of life the height of misery, although well accustomed to occasionally "roughing it;" but here I had fallen quite naturally into the way, and regarded being drenched through and through, in spite of umbrellas and oil-skins, as of very slight importance. It has told, however, on R——, who is "not so young as he was once," and neglecting himself he got worse and worse, putting duty after duty on my shoulders, until the 12th, when, coming home from work, he was clearly "run out." His dinner was pushed away

untasted, and he insisted upon going to bed at once. So we helped the old coffee planter to his cot; but he was stiff all over, and lay groaning and writhing long into the lonely hours of the night, while "Charlie" and I watched and rubbed him, and did what we could. But not even he himself had any idea what was the matter. About midnight nothing would satisfy him but starting at once for Palghaut, where there was a hospital with an intelligent native apothecary, who, he hoped, would be able to find out what was wrong. In vain we tried to dissuade him from the long wet journey, for it was of no avail; so, while his son ran down to the lines to collect twenty of our strongest men, I set to work to construct a munchiel. This was rather difficult, as there were no bamboo clumps within a mile which would afford a stem strong enough to support the burden down the rocky road to the plains. However, necessity is the mother of invention, and looking round, my eye lit upon the long poles, made of young sapling jack trees, which supported the division of our rooms; and seeing one could come away without bringing down everything in the neighbourhood, I was soon

at work upon it with a clasp knife, and, after being half choked with cobwebs and blinded with dust, got it safely down. But then there was the difficulty of the hammock. A blanket was lashed on, but wound itself into a robe, and was cut away as a failure, till fortunately I bethought me of an Ashantee hammock which had been used on the voyage out, and this was tried and found a great success, though somewhat frail in appearance. About one o'clock in the morning, in the heavy silence which precedes the dawn and the dense black darkness, the coolies shouldered my roughly made munchiel, we helped R—— in, and telling him we hoped to see him back soon, the melancholy procession started, and the torches borne by two or three of the party gleamed fitfully upon the wet tree trunks as the path wound up the ridge, until the light, becoming fainter, finally died away altogether and left us in solitude.

The first pay day in the jungle is always a difficult one for the new arrival, especially when he has to be his own paymaster to the forces, his cashier and clerk all rolled into one. The coinage is strange to him, and he is sure to get more or less mixed up in his pice, annas, and

rupees, unless he has a head which is better fitted for a mercantile desk at home than the backwoods. Most of those who try coffee planting have souls above mathematics, and to them their first experience of paying a horde of coolies (who, like all natives, dote on disputation) will be long remembered as a *dies iræ.* Still it is a thing which has to be done, however unpleasant; but I feel for King James "of sacred memory," who naïvely said, when receiving a petition to pay his Scotch bills, "Of all petitions this is the one which his majesty liketh the least."

Unfortunately for me, the next day after R——'s flight to the lowlands was Saturday, and all day long I was practising rapid reduction of rupees to the smallest coin of the empire, while striving to draw some consolation from the fact that the estate would have nothing to do with cowrie shells, 5120 of which go to the rupee. The thought of giving and counting out much small change of that sort would be distraction, four pice or cash to the anna being quite as much as I could stand with equanimity.

The day, like its predecessors, was miserably

cold and dull, and, fearful of being overtaken by darkness before getting through the paying, the estate bell was rung an hour earlier than usual to recall the coolies to the mustering ground. They came trooping in from all parts in strong force, and apparently with considerable interest, to see what was going to take place. When they were all mustered, the crowd was thicker and denser than I had ever seen it before, everybody having turned out, even to the lame and sick who were too ill to go to work. When I entered the great circle of nearly two hundred men, women, and children, looking as solemn as might be, with the fateful day-book in one hand and a huge bag of copper and silver coins in the other, having the half-caste clerk at my elbow to interpret, I was conscious that all eyes were upon me, and my smallest motion was being watched in deep silence by the assembled coolies. Determined to get into practice as soon as possible, instead of letting the half-caste call over the names, I determined to do it myself, and, shooting out the bag of money into a glittering heap on the rough wooden table in front of me, plunged at once into the long columns of out-

landish names, which filled ten or twelve folio pages of the day-book. Opposite to each name in our system of book-keeping, there were six rows of columns, one for each day of the week, and in each of these columns there was a whole mark, a half, or a blank, according as the coolie had worked—a whole day, a half-day, or none at all. Beyond these columns was one to record the total number of days worked out of the last six, and then another division to record the pay given out. At the end of the month the columns on each page were added up, both across and up and down, and, if exactly correct, the final reading in the bottom right-hand corner was exactly the same for both. Thus, it was impossible to make a mistake of even a pie without being able to discover it; but at the same time, among so many densely packed columns, it was difficult to avoid small errors, which would show up large in the final result, and cause a vast amount of trouble to correct. Thus I had to call each coolie's name first of all, and, if he had been working all day, put him down in the Saturday column with a mark; then add up his total work for the week—say, five and a half days—put this down in the

space devoted to it, calculate five and a half days at five annas a day—the rate at which we pay our men—put down Rs. 1 11*a.* 2*p.* in the pay space, count it out of the heap of coinage at my elbow, give it to the man, and dismiss him. This may sound simple enough, but there were many little difficulties to be surmounted. When I began calling the fearful and wonderful Tamil and Canarese names, there was a general titter round the circle, and three or four men answered at once, my pronunciation being so shaky that they could not distinguish whose name it was. However, I suppressed the giggling, and, having obtained "silence in the court," forged slowly ahead, every now and then making some mistake which set the natives smiling, but getting slowly into the way of the pronunciation, and running up the sums and counting out the change like a booking clerk. Often a coolie would conclude he had not got the right amount, and open a discussion, which I had to cut very short; and fifty per cent. of them thought their rupees were bad, so that from all sides rose the sound of money being chinked upon the rock to test its ring. Each native as he came up salaamed

and held out both his hands, edge to edge, to receive the overflowing bounty of the sahib. Poor people! the strongest man amongst them who had worked in the rain and sun all the week only took six times five annas—about equal to three shillings and fourpence—and on this, of course, many had to support a wife and children too ill or weak to toil. Then, again, the women—many of them mothers, with small brown fragments of humanity slung upon their backs—got three annas a day, and the most they could earn was little more than two shillings a week. Even the little children came up, ducked their small shaven heads in comical homage to the great white sahib, and held out very small brown hands for the price which those same hands were supposed to have earned, at the rate of a penny a day. Last of all, the maistries received pay at the rate of six or eight annas per diem, and then the horse-boys, cook, sweepers, and hangers-on of all sorts. When these were satisfied, there was still a small crowd of non-contents who came up and complained that their money was bad—would I change it? which I always did when possible, as if a poor fellow earned one rupee

and chanced to get paid with a bad, unchangeable coin, there was nothing but starvation for him during the next week. Others thought there was a mistake somewhere—always to their disadvantage—and their names had to be hunted for, and the amount of money given compared with that entered in the book. It was hopeless to please them all, but on going over the accounts during the course of the next evening I was well satisfied to find there was only an error of a few annas—happily too much given out, not too little.

Muster and paying over, and the stores and outhouses locked up, the estate pony seen to, and his feed of grain measured out, there were still the sick and ill clustered round the bungalow verandah to be attended to before being released for the day. With these I was much helped by R——'s son, who, having spent all his life in the south of India, knows the languages and habits of the natives. Between us we bandaged half a dozen ulcerated legs, sewed up a chopped finger, administered castor oil and Epsom salts—a horrible brew of "Charlie's" invention—to two babies, gave a dose of quinine to a young coolie girl who thought she had

fever, and some sulphur ointment to two in-patients suffering from the itch. One old woman, who had recently had small-pox, came up for her daily allowance of cod-liver oil, but she had forgotten to bring the top of a cocoa-nut shell with her, that being the article which is usually produced to receive medicine. In this dilemma I was for sending her back to the lines to fetch the cocoa-nut, but my young friend solved the difficulty in a very simple manner. Telling the poor woman to sit down on the ground, and open her mouth as wide as possible, and keep her eyes shut, and not to move a muscle, he put the allowance of oil into a handleless teacup, in which we mixed all our medicines one after the other, and then poured the contents into the woman's open mouth, to her complete satisfaction.

After this we were free to enjoy a much-needed rest, and we dined in solitary grandeur, spending the last evening of my first week in the forest telling stories—"Charlie's" being about the jungle and the "Blue Mountains" of Bangalore, where he had passed all his sixteen years, and I discoursing on the wonders of London and the beauties of the home country, subjects of which neither of us ever tired.

With such a congenial companion, Sunday passed harmlessly away in unpacking and overhauling my numerous belongings, and examining my four guns, with which my friend was delighted, his previous experience having been with heavy Snider rifles. We determined to take out the small "collecting gun" the next morning, to try it. Little did we think what an unfortunate resolve that was. A long eighteen-foot salmon rod, which I had brought in the expectation of getting some mahseer fishing, especially delighted "Charlie," who confessed he had never seen anything like it before, and persisted in practising fly-throwing with it all day. A more orthodox mode of spending the time was out of the question, as church is an institution unknown of here, and my book-box had not yet arrived, while R——'s library consisted of thirty copies of a pamphlet showing why he had suddenly left his last appointment, and "The Family Doctor," a painful, though perhaps useful work.

For the next few days there was a most enjoyable break in the clouds, and we seized the opportunity to hang out our wardrobes on every available bush and rattan in the neigh-

bourhood, that they might get dry after the last week's soaking. Like ants we also brought our stock of tinned provision into the sunshine, and put our boots and bed-clothes in a heap in a sunny corner of the verandah. In fact, we had been so miserably saturated for many days and nights that we brought forth everything movable to dry; and much they needed it!

The daily work was gone on with, but an unfortunate accident which happened to my comrade spoiled our enjoyment, and took me away from the estate for a while. Seizing a spare half-hour at breakfast-time one morning, we went out, accompanied by a sporting maistry, named Timma, to try the powers of the small gun which had so taken "Charlie's" fancy. This was a sixteen-bore muzzle-loader, and, being only intended for securing specimens of little birds, was loaded with a small charge. All went well, and we procured some finches and a thrush new to me, until we got to No. 3 clearing, where we rested for a time. I had previously noticed my friend was a little careless of the small gun which he was carrying, and begged him to keep it at half-cock. He promised to do so, but while leaning against the

trunk of a fallen tree in the young coffee, and listening to the grey pigeons in the jungle, he thoughtlessly put the hammer up ready for a chance shot, and, resting the muzzle on the toe of his boot to keep it clean, began playing with the trigger while he talked. I was intent on watching for a pigeon, and did not notice this, but all of a sudden there was a report at my side, and, looking hastily round, I saw the gun fall to the ground and my companion stagger backwards. "What on earth is the matter?" I said. "Oh," said he, "my foot has gone!" But it was not quite so bad as that. When the smoke cleared away his foot was all right, but we saw an ugly sight. His boot was blackened with the burnt powder, and in the toe was a great ragged hole, out of which, as we looked, the blood slowly welled, and ran over upon the ground in a thick red stream. He behaved very well, but would not let me take his boot off until we got home; so, there being no time to stand on ceremony or send for help, I threw the two guns to the maistry, and, taking my companion on my back, "made tracks" as fast as possible to the settlement, which was more than half a mile away. "Charlie" is a substantial

fellow, and the day was hot, but the blood which trickled down continually kept me at my best pace, and in a few minutes we were safe in our hut and I was busy cutting away at the blood-sodden boot, every movement of which caused my unfortunate comrade a sharp pain. At last it began to come off, and I drew it away in fear and trembling, for I expected there would be two or three toes loose inside, but was delighted to see, when the foot was at length bare, that though the big toe and the next one were a powder-and-blood-stained mass, nothing had actually come away; and after washing them carefully in tepid water, I was able to assure the unfortunate fellow that, by a wonderful chance, the whole charge of shot had passed between the two toes. Thus, though both bones were visible and the flesh was hanging in shreds, no great harm was done. Patching the flesh up as well as might be, and sewing it together with white thread—silk being lacking—we finally wrapped all up in lint and rags, and there was my friend, disabled and looking like a gentleman with a bad attack of the gout. He had borne the whole thing with the most excellent fortitude, and when it was over was a good deal more cheerful than I was.

That night I ransacked my memory for thrilling accounts of adventures on English rivers and Norwegian fiords, and sat up late by the bedside of my damaged comrade, cheering him. But the next day, and the day after, his foot hurt him more and more; and he got an idea into his head that lockjaw was coming on, as the wound was looking rather green; and at last insisted upon going down to his father at Palghaut. So a second time my rough and ready carpentering abilities were called into use to make another munchiel, this bout of a young bamboo stem, supporting a strong blanket held open by short pieces of wood at either end, and covered in on top by a broad sheet of palm-leaf matting strengthened by cross-bars. It was well I took the precaution to put a waterproof covering over the hammock, as the sky looked very threatening, and the thunder was rolling about like the chariot wheels of Indra on the other side of the clouds.

Late in the afternoon of the 16th of October, our preparations were complete; and having determined to take my friend down to the lowlands at his earnest request, as he was quite helpless by himself, and hoping to get back early

the next morning, the munchiel and a dozen coolies, with a strong but bad-tempered old horse, the property of the estate, for myself, were all waiting outside. Scarcely had "Charlie" been safely stowed into the munchiel, than there was a bright flash of lightning and a roar of thunder directly overhead, which set my steed dancing and neighing with fright, and down fell the rain, as if the floor of heaven had given way and a second deluge was coming on. Hastily giving the signal to start, I scrambled into the saddle, much to the disgust of the tattoo, who thought the stable more comfortable than the jungle paths on such an afternoon; and before we had gone a hundred yards every one of us but my friend in the hammock was saturated through and through. The rain was tremendous. Not content with coming down in drops like ordinary rain, it seemed to descend in blinding torrents. The thick roof of leaves overhead made no difference; every leaf was a small waterspout, and the tree trunks were glossy with water pouring from them. The ground, which a few minutes before had been fairly dry and solid, was now a swamp in places, and on the steep parts was cut up by

hundreds of rushing rivulets, which tore along, sweeping down sticks, stones, and rubbish to the nearest stream, in headlong rush. I no longer wondered why the hill-tops of this region are bare and soilless. A few such storms would wash away anything except firmly fixed rocks. It is a wonder the trees themselves stand.

Through this cruel storm we made our way, scarcely seeing the bridle-track for the rain, the thunder rolling overhead and the trees swinging about and bending like reeds, threatening every moment to fall on us or at least block our road; until, as darkness came on, we emerged into the estate of the Dewan of Cochin, from which, to the head of the ghaut, the road was "pucka," and there was less chance of missing it. Here, my horse being nervous and excited, I thought a gallop might do him good; so, leaving the munchiel behind, I made the best of my way through the tall coffee of this clearing, as fast as my steed liked to go, and never drew rein until on the borders of D——'s estate of Polyampara, where, after some time, the munchiel came up; thereon, holding a consultation with my friend and the maistry in charge, we determined to stay the night at D——'s bunga-

low, and go on the next morning to Palghaut. There was small chance of being able to cross the flooded rivers in the darkness and rain, leaving out of consideration the haunted samee place, which the coolies were loth to pass on such a night. So we betook ourselves to the friendly shelter, and were, as usual, hospitably received.

The journey down was concluded next day without any noteworthy incident, and R——, who was laid up in the hospital at Palghaut, received his son and news of the gun accident at the same time. Finding there was no hope of his being able to move for two or three days, and being anxious about the working of the coolies during my absence, I bade good-bye to two or three hospitable friends, picked up in the rapid way in which acquaintances are made at Indian stations, and early next morning turned my back on the pleasant little town—much more warm and genial than the gaunt, gloomy jungles. Riding hard, I reached Wallenghay in time for a late breakfast at Widow Vladimir's. Here I learnt that two Englishmen had gone the day before up to the jungles to shoot, and anxious to know who they were, I pressed on,

fording the stream at the foot of the ghaut, and commenced the ascent.

Passing through the lowlands, the heat had been very great, in spite of the fact that my clothes were of the whitest and thinnest "duck;" but as I mounted into higher regions, the temperature fell very rapidly, and from the appearance of the clouds I feared there was another drenching in store for myself and horse.

At one part of the road, where the jungle hung very dense on either side, and we were proceeding slowly to give Rozinante breathing time before the stiffest part of the ascent was reached, something moved in the jungle on my left, and then a beautiful spotted deer came out upon the road and paced slowly along about twelve yards in front of me, apparently not in the least frightened by my presence. This is one of the most lovely of animals, and well known to every Indian sportsman. Its hide is of the warmest mouse-coloured brown, with a darker ridge down the back, and marked in every part of its graceful body with pure white moonlike discs. This one especially, as it stepped slowly along through the dappled sunlight which came

glancing through the forest foliage, with its slender legs and wide-spreading four-pronged horns, looked the very embodiment of grace and natural beauty. I had no gun with me, and, if I had had one, should scarcely have felt the heart to use it; so the pretty creature accompanied me some way, and then was lost in the mazes of the jungle.

Just as the great bamboo region was reached, at an elevation of about one thousand feet above the sea, the sky grew black as ink, and a wind came rushing out of the mountain gorges, bending the trees before it and bringing the mist in its wake; and then the storm overhead broke and the rain came down in ceaseless torrents, turning a thousand rills into dashing streams and making my path a slippery swamp, in which the horse staggered about, while the steam rose from him in columns. Between rain and steam I soon was in the condition of moist blotting-paper. But turning back was not to be thought of, and it was very necessary to reach a torrent which crossed the road on ahead before it should be so flooded as to become impassable, and my steed, who seemed to know his stable lay in front of him, floundered up the

slippery road and soon brought me to the banks. This stream, which has been mentioned before as being noticeable for the six or seven round basins worn in its bed a little higher up, where the road cut it, has no well-defined course, but in dry weather trickles across a broad, flat shelf of rock, and falls with a musical tinkle into a beautiful fern-grown chasm on the far side. But now the scene was anything but promising. Instead of a rivulet meandering downwards, there was a foaming brown torrent racing over the ledge, carrying down great loose stones with it and falling with a loud roar far down into the unknown chasm below, while the road, which must be reached if I wanted any supper, was just discernible through the spray and mist amongst the rocks on the far side. My horse was quite frightened, and could not be brought to try the venture while I was on his back; so, seeing it was useless that way, and being already wet through, I jumped off and, dragging the horse after me, waded in. At first the water was only a foot deep, but it soon rose and filled my top-boots, and got higher and higher, until in mid-stream the rush was so severe, every moment I expected to lose my

footing. The horse's hoofs clattered and slipped on the smooth rock, and he grew more and more nervous. In one place we were only a few yards from the edge where the stream broke into foam and went thundering down the gulley, and a slip there would have sent us both to wander in other worlds; but we got by and were almost safe, when a grey figure, that had been watching us unseen, sprang up among the misty rocks in front, and with a most sepulchral and mournful howl, such as none but evil-minded things could give, dashed back into the jungle. My horse reared right up and snorted, and I thought his last moment had come, but he regained his footing by a wonderful chance, and a moment after we were standing, dripping, safe on shore. The weird apparition that had startled us at so critical a moment was a hungry hyena on the look out for dead bodies. Probably he had seen us arrive on the opposite shore, and, with the cunning of his species, had fancied there was a bountiful supper in store for him, which, of course, must have been a very exciting prospect on so wet an afternoon. One can easily imagine with what eager interest, as he crouched among the rocks, the gaunt

brute watched the Englishman and his horse; and his feelings can be understood when his supper *in futuro* passed the most dangerous place and had nearly reached safety. No wonder he howled!

Then into the saddle again, and ever upwards through the lonely and gloomy bamboo jungles—the chosen home of bison and tigers—where the rain half blinded me, and the tall stems on either side lashed about like reeds in the wind. The samee place was reached at dusk, and looked the very beau ideal of a haunt of ghosts, with the white mist eddying about the groaning trees, the dead leaves whirling in circles, and the great pile of wooden memorials of human suffering. Here, getting on to level ground, and consequently a better made road, it was possible to ride fast, and, galloping through the storm, we crossed Polyampara and the jungle beyond, passed the next bungalow of C. H——, and skirted W——'s estate of Poothapara without stopping. I subsequently asked the latter if he had seen me, and he said he was smoking in his verandah and had noticed a horseman in white, on a "fiery black steed," passing along the high ground when the

storm was at its worst, and had been sorely perplexed to think who could be out riding on such an evening. In fact, I let the horse make his own pace, and, his home being in front and his grain waiting, we did quick time for the rest of the way, and, just "saving daylight into harbour," cantered down into the settlement as darkness fell.

Persons of a sanguine temperament will find the first year on a new estate full of little difficulties and disappointments, and will often be severely tried if they are given to feeling lonely. Now, I had promised myself a comfortable dinner and a pleasant change into dry clothes after my long ride, but when the bungalow was reached, it was shut up and still, no cheerful light or promising smoke issuing from the chimney—everything was wet, cheerless, and dark. I shouted "Ghora-wallah!" till the jungle echoed, but no one came; so, vowing vengeance on the truant "horse boy," I took the horse to the stable, unsaddled him, wiped him down, fed him, and then got into my bungalow by the "office" window, as the door was locked.

It took ten minutes to find and rouse the

"cook boy," who was stupefied with arrack, which he had been drinking to keep the damp and cold out; and, while he exerted his feeble intellect in making a fire in the store with a pile of wet logs, my clothes were changed; and, once more dry again and under shelter, my thoughts turned on dinner, my last "pucka" meal having been at the "Travellers' Bungalow" at Palghaut the evening before. So I asked the boy what he proposed to give me. He was still extremely foggy, and, after rubbing his eyes and thinking for a moment, said, "Nothing, sahib." My only reply was to direct him to open one of my tins of preserved soup, which I had brought up for such an occasion, and get it ready "juldie;" but, to my extreme disgust, he informed me, in confused sentences, that two Englishmen had been up the day before, and had dropped in to see me, but finding I was away and, as the stupid "boy" told them, not expected back for some time, they breakfasted here, and seemed to have made free with the tinned provisions, after which they marched southward. A short note, which the servant produced from his turban, told me that their own provisions not

having then come up, and hearing I should not be back for some time, they had looted what they had seen in the cupboard, and would replace them "with very many thanks before I returned." This was but cold comfort, and on examining what food there was left, I found it consisted of a bottle of palm-brandy, two pounds of black pepper, and the remains of a piece of bacon which hung above my bed. The sole consolation was that my unknown guests had not been able to borrow my store of tobacco, which, under some benign influence, I had locked up before starting for the lowlands.

There was nothing to be done but to put the best face on the matter; so I was soon seated at the table, with the lamp burning dimly overhead in the dense opal-coloured smoke of the wood fire, which did not seem to care about going up the chimney in an orthodox manner, and several rashers of bacon in front, flanked by the arrack and huge pepper-tin. There was some comfort for the meagreness of the fare in making as much display as possible. After all, hunger is the best sauce for all kinds of food, and one can dine very fairly off bacon and plenty of pepper after a long wet ride,

especially if there is nothing else to be had, while arrack punch is excellent when properly made. There were, indeed, a few little extra inconveniences, such as the night insects, who seemed to be having a public meeting round the lamp and on the table, continually hopping into my plate or glass; and then again a musk-rat had been crawling over the bacon while it was suspended on the wall, and had left a remarkably strong taste behind him. This set me thinking on the many stories I had read of the skill of native servants in poisoning people in a mild way, so that they gradually languished and slid into other worlds, and I fell to wondering whether my cook was to be trusted. He knew well there were several hundred rupees in the safe, the keys of which were in my pocket: what would be easier than for him to give me a sleeping draught or a dose of powdered glass, and then there was a fortune at his command! And then what a shocking bad character he had! F—— had sent him down to me the first day of my arrival, with a note to the effect that he was sure I should be in want of a servant, and as the bearer was "the biggest rogue and

greatest thief in the district," he could not keep him any longer, and hoped he might suit me until something better was to be had. His name was "Chokra" when he entered my service, but my young friend "Charlie" re-christened him "Sheitan" after a short acquaintance with his dusky form and darkling habits. Meditating in this vein, while the fire burnt low and the rain beat upon the thatch and the wind howled, something caused me to look over my shoulder, and there stood the object of my thoughts, with his arms folded on his chest, silent and motionless, scarcely anything of his evil face being visible in the gloom but his white teeth and rolling eyeballs. At first I was considerably taken aback, but thinking this might be a good opportunity to see what sort of a man he was, I proceeded to ask him a question or two. "Well, Sheitan," I said, "you told me the other day you had been to a native school; now, what did you learn there? Any geography?" This was rather a long word for him, but he said, "Yes;" so I continued, "That's right. Now, where do Englishmen come from?" Without moving a muscle he answered placidly, "Palghaut, sahib," and he

obviously believed that was the rim of the world, his *Ultima Thule*, beyond which there was nothing but uncertainty. So I tried another track. "Are you a Christian, Sheitan?" I inquired. "Yes, sahib," he said. "That's right. Then of course you know where you will go when you die?" I inquired. He looked at me for a moment with his big gloomy eyes, and then, all solemn and motionless, said, "To hell, sahib." I thought, after this, I would not make any more inquiries as to his education, but bidding him pile up the fire and call me at daybreak, dismissed him for the night.

But at best it was not possible to spend a very cheerful evening. The rain beat down incessantly, and the wind sobbed amongst the tree-tops and rattled the long pendant creepers together in mournful tunes. Every now and then one of the stoppings of the holes in the sides of the hut, through which the stove-pipe had formerly passed, would be blown in, followed by a gust of wind and a torrent of rain, and the gap had to be hastily plugged up again with anything that came first to hand. Once or twice I heard big branches snap off from the trees in the jungle and fall crashing to earth,

and any moment one might come through the roof of my hut. Then the prospect of the next day was not agreeable. A thousand odd acres of land on my hands, and a couple of hundred coolies to look after and control before I had been a week up here or knew a word of the language, and, last but not least, the mosquitoes which drove me half wild, and the small beetles that would crawl down my back or up my sleeves just when I was comfortably smoking. As for fleas, they abound wherever coolies are, and I grew quite indifferent to them and their bites—perhaps would even feel lonely without them. But there is a larger creature of the grasshopper tribe, which makes day and night hideous with its noise, and for this insect I entertained the most cordial hatred. The sound it makes is quite indescribable, but seems most like a couple of metal saws going through a plate of sheet iron. If I had any other feelings but wrath while this evil being is performing, they would be wonderment and admiration for the powers of so small a musician. Fancy a creature two inches long, who can cause himself to be heard half a mile away! What a blessing it is such

powers are not given to human beings! An Irish member of Parliament with any such gift would upset our Constitution; but the thought is horrible. These terrible nuisances the jungle crickets are supposed to make their fearful sounds by rubbing their legs over their wing-cases, and though their legs are certainly armed with a formidable row of sharp spines, they must work very hard to obtain such results. One of them came into my room on the evening of my return from Palghaut, just as I had put out the light and was falling asleep, and, settling on the rim of our washing-basin, deliberately tuned up and launched into a wild chorus of screeches. I listened for a moment, and then one of my boots flew in the direction of the sound, and knocked the basin to the ground. For a while the enemy was silenced, but just as I was falling asleep again he started afresh on the rafters overhead. Another boot dislodged him; but as fast as he was driven from one spot he tuned up in another, and so, finding him irrepressible, I struck a light and, after a prolonged chase into every corner of the hut, succeeded in securing him, and magnani-

mously let him go through one of the holes in the sides of the bungalow. The last thing I heard before going to sleep was his detestable song from the roof-ridge of my bedroom, in return for this Buddhistic clemency.

CHAPTER III.

"UNDER THE SUN."

Naturally enough, the work that fell upon me after R——'s compulsory absence in hospital at Palghaut was very hard. At five o'clock each morning it was necessary to be up and have the great bell rung, and then came the mustering of the coolies, and the setting them their various tasks. This would have been nearly an impossibility for me without any knowledge of Tamil and Canarese, but for the assistance of the half-caste, who interpreted my orders. Then, from 6 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. I was continually on the move, hurrying hither and thither, scrambling about the clearings, pushing through the jungles, and making myself as "numerous" as possible. For this sort of work it is, of course, hopeless to use a horse, as the ground is much too rough and obstructed, and riding

in the jungle is out of the question, except just in the beaten track, on account of the creepers and bamboos.

At half-past twelve there was a brief interval of rest for breakfast, during which our tapal, or running postman, from the plains arrived, and some of the time had to be devoted to reading and answering letters, private and on business; and then, all writing finished, and the necessary orders for food and the wants of the estate having been sent to the native agents in Palghaut and Wallenghay, the postman put his little wicker-basket on his head, and set out again for the lowlands.

The endurance of these men is something wonderful. We had four of them in our service, and every day one of them came up with our letters, etc. They arranged that one man should start from Palghaut immediately on the arrival of the early morning mail, with letters, papers, butter, eggs, and occasionally clean clothes or something of the kind, all packed into a small basket, weighing perhaps five or six pounds, and carried on his head. He ran the whole eleven miles to Wallenghay by every short cut he knew of, and

as fast as he could go. At Wallenghay he found another tapal waiting, and transferred the basket; whereupon the second man "made tracks" for the jungle, and his was the hardest stage, for he had to face the ghaut road, with its tiger-haunted glens and unholy places. Only stopping perhaps to drink and pray for a minute or two by some brook-side, he gained the mountain tops, and arrived at my bungalow about one o'clock. Then, as previously mentioned, while he sat on his heels in the verandah and chewed a little betel-nut, I was writing the answers to the correspondence he had brought up, and when they were finished the basket was refilled with anything that had to be returned to the plains, and the tapal salaamed and started away again for the ghaut road. He generally managed to reach Wallenghay the same evening, whence my correspondence was taken to Palghaut in time for the early post to Madras and the rest of India the next morning. Thus the man who had the Wallenghay to Pardagherry stage (and each of our four men took it regularly in turn) had to do sixteen miles uphill with a heavy weight on his head, and then sixteen miles downhill again, between ten in the morning and sunset. As

might be expected, they were models of good training, without an ounce of superfluous fat anywhere about them; and, as their clothing consisted of a long strip of white cloth wound round and round the waist and hanging down to the knees, it was possible to study the muscles of the human body, as shown forth under their smooth copper-coloured skin, to great advantage.

After the arrival and departure of the tapal—the event of the day in these lonely wilds—there was always another long spell of work to be done during the afternoon, and this was the hottest and most fatiguing part of the toil, made especially trying as the coolies were by this time very nearly spent, and the greatest exertions were necessary, in our wilderness-like clearing, to get any work out of them after three o'clock. So by the hour the sun was sinking amongst the tree-tops in the west, and the great bell was tolling to recall every one, I was generally very glad to hear it. On getting back to the settlement, roll-call had to be gone through, the sick attended, the horse watched while he fed, in order that the ghora-wallah might not steal the grain, and the tools issued

in the morning received back and counted, all of which made rest, and then dinner, very welcome.

But the evenings were oppressively solitary. No Englishman within five or six miles, and then only one, and he very taciturn. Riding to any of the estates was not to be thought of after a day's severe work in the sun, without taking into account the dark jungle paths reeking with fever-mist at night, tangled with roots, and the off chance of meeting an elephant or bison. So there was nothing to do but smoke in silence, and turn in as early as might be.

I had a considerable amount of trouble with the boy "Sheitan." He would persist in washing himself and his clothes in my only saucepan, and kept my rice in an old stocking, while his kitchen, which abutted on the bungalow, was like nothing so much as a coal-hole, and had a great heap of refuse in one corner. Occasionally I looked into this place to keep the sanitary arrangements in some sort of control, and nearly always found my "boy" had company of some sort; in fact, I rather think there was a small relief camp on my premises, under the cook's management, for my rice went wonderfully fast, as did my other provisions. Once or twice I

found a native woman nominally assisting at the cooking, and "Sheitan" always answered my inquiries by saying, "This my mother, sahib, just come from Wallenghay"—apparently careless of the fact that he had said the same of quite another woman, and that it was not probable he had two or three mothers. Then, again, there was some difficulty in clothing him. When he first put in an appearance, he was in bathing costume, and, thinking such an important factotum should be respectably clad, I exercised my mind to find him some garments, but without success, until at last, calling him into the bungalow, I explained my views, and bade him look round and see if there was anything which might do; so in his solemn way he marched round and inspected all my belongings. He was dissatisfied with a shirt, and it must be confessed, when he was inside it, with the sleeves flapping helplessly over his hands and his head only just coming above the collar, he did not look very dignified or fit to wait at table. So he proceeded with his search, and, after a minute or two of hesitation over a pillow-case, finally chose a soiled linen-bag which was hanging on a peg, and expressed his

opinion that, if he might have it, it would make a splendid pair of pyjamas. On receiving permission, he walked off with the bag, which was white, with large purple spots. I thought he intended to cut it up and make a jacket out of it, but in less than half an hour an animated bolster entered the hut, with a pair of brown legs below, and a head and arms on top. After having boasted of his tailoring skill, he had contented himself with laying the linen-bag on the floor, and, slicing off the two bottom corners with a knife, had roughly hemmed the edges, and then, getting into it, had put his feet through the holes and drawn the tapes at the mouth tight round his chest. He was perfectly serious, and afterwards continued to wear this ridiculous garment in all weathers, asleep and awake, for kitchen work and for waiting, during the next three weeks; and, as may be supposed, by that time it wanted washing.

On the estate, the work that had to be done was not very varied, but consisted in preparing the guinea-grass clearing, road-making, and utilizing the end of the monsoon for planting out a few thousand more coffee trees into one of the clearings, and filling up "failures" in

others. The first work is simple enough, and when the grass is established, it needs no more attention, but in a good situation affords a continual cut of hay for cattle, without any trouble expended in return. In forming a field, the only thing necessary is to secure a wet week or ten days for the operation, which is briefly as follows. The roots of the grass, having been brought into the clearing, which has been previously freed from weeds, stones, and branches so far as may be, are torn in parts, each of which should have about twelve stems. Coolies, armed with mamôties, then dig or scrape little holes in the ground, as much as possible in lines, and about eighteen inches apart. In these the second line of coolies, usually women or boys, place the roots, but instead of planting them upright, divide each bunch, and, when inserting them in the holes, bend half the stems one way and half the other—an arrangement which is supposed to make the plant spread more and cover the ground. In this way, when the field is completely planted, all care is over, for if the rain continues for a few days after the planting the roots will strike, and the young shoots, coming

up with all the luxuriance of tropical vegetation, will soon hide rocks, fallen trees, and stones in a waving sea of green.

The road-making was harder work, and consisted in opening a passage along the steep hillside in No. 4 clearing. This occupied a great number of our coolies, under the supervision of many of the maistries, and cost a very considerable amount above the usual allowance. Owing to the very heavy nature of the timber, and to the ground being on a steep hillside, all the trees in falling had gone one way, and had to be cut through; whereas on the level the trees take no particular direction, and frequently leave clear spaces of considerable magnitude. In the present case, however, we had not that advantage, and the three or four miles of road which R—— had requested me to open before his return constituted a formidable enterprise. Every morning I marched out at the head of the attacking forces, consisting often of a hundred men armed with mamôties, crowbars, and axes, and every evening, as we wound our way homewards, the road had been a few yards further advanced. But we met obstacles which gave us a vast amount of

trouble. Now and again it was the stump of a forest giant, that had been cut off five feet above the ground, which we had to draw, like a mighty tooth. One or two of these stumps took us four or five days' toil. The first day's would go in scratching away the soil and undermining the roots, and when those were laid bare we had the task of cutting through them, many being underground branches as thick as the stem of a small tree. When at last they were severed, all available hands were mustered, and, with crowbars and long levers, the stump was slowly hoisted out amongst the frantic cries of the maistries and shouts of the perspiring coolies, to be rolled down the hillside, where it is to stay for twenty or thirty years, until sun and rain have resolved it into dust. The greater proportion of the trees were cut through in two places, and the intermediate portion was rolled away easily enough ; but sometimes, in spite of my utmost engineering skill, the upper portion of the trunk would come rolling down the hill-slope, sending every one flying for his life, and blocking up the track again. A coolie was once overtaken by one of these, and only saved from

being crushed out of all form by the log tilting up and sliding over that under which he crouched. But the most troublesome features of the road-making were the logs of ironwood, of which we had to remove three or four. Their name perfectly expresses their nature—they are literally vegetable iron; and I could tell, so soon as I entered the clearing, whether the coolies were at work upon one, by the metal-like ring the wood gave forth when struck by the axes. Standing close by, at every stroke that was made I saw the axes bound back as though struck against a steel block, and a very minute chip of wood was the only result; in fact, the axes often got the worst of the encounter, and had to be frequently changed. Rolling these logs was a work of immense labour, on account of their great density and weight. A few dynamite cartridges skilfully placed would have saved us a lot of trouble, but unfortunately we had none on the estate; but that is the way they dispose of tough tree-stumps in Australia, and it answers excellently. The third of my chief occupations consisted in taking the young coffee plants up out of the "nursery," and removing them to the spots where they were

finally to be planted. The "nursery," which was in the corner of No. 1, and in an angle formed by the Manalora river and a small stream which emptied itself into it, had been formed eighteen months before; in fact, it is always the first operation on a new estate after the planter and his coolies have been roughly hutted.

A suitable spot having been selected—and the great essentials are nearness to a stream, so that the young plants may be watered during the hot weather and immediately after they are planted, and that good shade-trees may overhang the "nursery,"—a depth of rich earth, of a deep brown colour, is considered the best, with accessibility to all parts of the estate and to the jungle, where the great stores of leaf-mould are. These things having been secured, the land is cleared of all weeds and shrubs, which are grubbed up and removed by hand, nothing in this case being burnt upon the spot; but the stuff removed is often formed into a hedge round the place to keep off the wild animals, which do a great deal of damage by roaming about at night and nibbling the young shoots of the coffee.

The next operation is to divide the ground with a broad path down the centre, and numerous parallel beds on either side, eighteen feet long by two broad. They should not be of any greater breadth, or it will be impossible to attend to the young plants, when they appear, without injuring some. When the beds have been deeply dug, the coffee seeds in the outer wrapper or "parchment" are planted in little holes drawn at right angles across the bed, each seed about four inches from its neighbours. Mr. W. Sabonadière, an old planter, says that one bushel of seed is calculated to yield about thirty thousand plants; and so for an estate of a hundred acres four or five bushels of seed would be required, according as the nature of the soil allowed the plants to be placed far apart or near together. But it must be remembered that a considerable portion of the seed sown will never come to anything, so it is as well to leave a margin for losses. A few weeks of warm, damp weather will bring the young plants to the surface, and they appear first with two cotyledons or seed-leaves, after which the stem shoots rapidly up; and in from twelve to eighteen months the "nursery" will

be in a flourishing condition, and the beds filled with luxuriant young plants with glossy dark green leaves about sixteen inches in height. At this stage of growth they require a little attention in the way of watering when the weather is exceptionally hot, and many planters collect dry leaves from the adjacent jungle, and spread them thickly between the rows in order to retain the moisture in the ground. We adopted this plan at the request of the company at home, and though the leaves were a decided advantage to the plants, they harboured an astonishing number of snakes, of which the coolies were very much frightened—without much cause, however, as the most numerous variety was a little grey-and-white reptile, about a foot long and quite harmless; though once or twice a very deadly snake, the tic-polonga, was seen making for the jungle, and was permitted to escape unmolested, every man taking to his heels in the opposite direction.

At last comes the important operation of "planting out," of which there are several modes. One is to scoop the young plant up by a complicated sort of trowel, which removes the seedling and the earth round its roots, and

then to convey it to the clearing, bedding the plant out and filling up the hole with soil. But our way, which seems the most certain, though slightly more expensive, is to have great quantities of light wicker baskets manufactured at Palghaut and Wallenghay, of the size and shape of a flower-pot. These are made of split rattan cane, and, though they should be tough and elastic, it is essential that they should not be so closely woven as to prevent the roots of the plant piercing them and penetrating the surrounding soil. It is better to have them too loose than too well made. Into these a couple of handfuls of the best jungle leaf-mould is placed, and then the young coffee plants are carefully taken up with a short trowel, a small piece is cut off the tap-root to prevent it being bent, and they are placed one in each basket, where they may be safely left until it is convenient to move them into the clearings. It is curious that the centre root should be so sensitive, but if it gets at all bent it seems to impair the vitality of the top of the plant. Consequently, this part of the operation has to be very carefully watched, and only the maistries are intrusted with the pruning-knives.

They go from coolie to coolie, and take off a few inches of each tap-root. One advantage of basket planting is that the plants can be left about for some time without danger. Thus, I had five thousand plants brought from the "nursery" into No. 3 clearing, and placed along the side of the road, where they awaited planting until more pressing work was over; and the rest of the time all the women and boys were filling up "failures," *i.e.* putting new plants in places where those formerly planted had died out from various causes, principally from having been placed in holes that have hard rock below, into which the roots cannot penetrate.

With such hard work as this, there was hardly time to feel lonely, as all my days were spent in continual activity, and the necessity of retiring early to rest, in order to be up the next morning at daybreak, cut the evening very short. Still for two weeks I had not seen a single white face or spoken my own language, except in the form of a few brief orders to the headmen and half-caste "writer," and at times it certainly was monotonous; and under such circumstances one's mind gets choked up with

thoughts and ideas for which there is no outlet, unless one takes to talking to one's self or to inanimate objects, a habit which is common amongst people who have lived much alone. My sole connection with civilization was the daily tapal, who brought me occasional and very welcome letters from "home," a chance paper from Madras, and advice from the hospital-bound superintendent at Palghaut. On Saturday mornings the same tapal brought up a couple of hundred rupees, more or less, in small coinage of copper and silver, for paying the coolies, and this had to be accurately counted before he left the plantation again. But the days were very much alike—nearly all being characterized by pouring rain and cold mists in the early morning, and a continual state of soppiness as to all my possessions; in fact, I never longed so eagerly for fine weather in an English February as I did while alone on the estate. Of course there are occasional breaks in the monsoon, when the sun is very powerful, and everything steams like a vapour-bath; but the usual state of affairs at the intermediate season is moist and cheerless.

I had a slight attack of dysentery at one

time, brought on probably by being so often wet through, and by the rapid changes of temperature. This made the work the harder; but after nursing myself for half a day, I found inaction was quite unbearable, and continued my usual occupations until the attack thought fit to slacken. In fact, there is so much hard work to be done on a new estate that getting ill is unpermissible.

On the last day of October the weather cleared up a little, and the bright sunshine brought out additional numbers of insects and butterflies, while the birds were more lively. They flew from tree to tree, chasing each other about and enjoying the warmth. The only striking species of birds I had noticed so far were a small colony of half a dozen golden orioles, who had their abode in a small patch of jungle in the bed of a nullah, and were chiefly remarkable for their discordant cries, ill beseeming their beautiful orange plumage, and their extreme shyness. Another bird was somewhat like a magpie, of small and graceful proportions, with a black-and-white body, and a remarkable tail between one and two feet long. I first came across one of these birds when it

was feeding amongst some low bushes, and it sprang up and ascended through the tops of the trees, dragging its long white tail behind like an animated sky-rocket.

On the 1st of November R—— returned to resume the charge of affairs, and I was well satisfied to hear from him, after he had been round the estate, that the work done during his absence exceeded his expectations. Yet he was still feeble, and felt conscious of impaired energies, and he advised me to prepare myself to take charge of the estate again, as he felt very doubtful of being able to remain long away from the doctor's hands. In this way, the old planter advising and instructing often from his bed, where his weakness confined him most of the time, and I executing the instructions, working all day far and near, and of a necessity equally hard in rain and sunshine, and devoting the evenings to estate correspondence and accounts, we found ourselves at the end of the first week in November, with the dry season close at hand, and a great deal of interesting work to be done in the ensuing six months.

CHAPTER IV.

A FEEBLE FOLK.

FATE seemed determined that I should win experience single handed! I had not been on the estate ten days, when R—— was forced to go to the lowlands on account of sickness, and returned little improved in strength. After making a very plucky stand against his painful complaint for a week, and directing my labours from his couch, or feebly hobbling for short distances round the estate, leaning heavily on his stick, he broke down hopelessly again on the evening of the 7th, and begged me to get carriers and a hammock to take him away to the lowlands. So, deeply chagrined, I turned out, collected twenty coolies with a trustworthy maistry, and prepared the munchiel, at which experience had made me quite expert. It was a very dark night, with a fine drizzling rain, and the torches

of split bamboo carried by the men threw fitful gleams around, making the tree-trunks look copper-coloured, and illuminating our little hut, but rendering the surrounding darkness even more dense by comparison. R—— was quite broken down, and as I helped him into the munchiel he said, "Good-bye, Arnold; you will never see me again;" and with this cheerful remark the procession moved slowly off, and left me in the darkness and rain, to my not over-pleasing meditations.

There was nothing to do, however, but to "buckle to" again, and the next week my whole time was occupied with the usual work, and building a new set of temporary "lines" for some coolies expected from Madura. These were made of corrugated iron, sent up from the agents at Calicut, and intended eventually for roofing the permanent buildings and bungalows. It costs a great deal for carriage, even from the lowlands, and much more must be added for transport from England, besides which it certainly does not make convenient coolie "lines;" and while there is so much timber as here, excellently suited for roofing purposes, it seems hardly worth its cost. The finishing touches

were also put to a very small hut about fifteen yards from the one used hitherto, and just across the footpath, which was to be my abode for some time. It was not palatial in dimensions, being about twenty by fourteen feet, nor was the architecture impressive, or the decoration elaborate. It was simply a little band-box-like edifice, made of the usual "brown paper and touch-wood" sort of material which we used up there, *i.e.* stakes stuck into the ground and covered with Palghaut matting. It had, however, two advantages over the one I occupied before from a sanitary point of view: the floor was raised up and made of thick planks, resting on rough piles of stones fore and aft; and another advantage was that there were mats on both sides of the stakes instead of only on one, which made it drier. I had great trouble in getting the workmen to put these mats on straight. An accurate line is totally unappreciated by an ordinary native; again and again I showed them how the lines should run horizontal or perpendicular. They listened in silence, and seemed to understand perfectly, but the next two or three mats would point to every part of the compass, and cruelly ruffle my notions of

order. The roof, which was made extra thick, with the eaves brought to within four feet of the ground to protect the sides, was made of the long sweet-scented lemon-grass, and there were three little glass windows, a door with a rough porch, and a wall of matting across the interior to divide the sleeping compartment from the day-room. Altogether it was a strange little place, pretty to look at while the materials were fresh and clean, but not good for hard use—the daylight streaming through the two thicknesses of matting in many places, and the wind coming in at every corner; while after a shower every part got damp, and, being entirely built of vegetable produce, there was a very strong odour of decaying matter—something between wet hay and bilge-water on a steamer. When dry, the lemon-grass had it all its own way, and the scent then was very pleasant.

While out one day in the clearings, the sun, which had been shining brightly a little while before, became rapidly overcast, and light shadows like falling leaves began to chase each other over the ground. Looking up to see what could be the explanation of this, I per-

ceived a strange sight overhead. It was a mighty emigration of newly developed butterflies, seeking "fresh fields and pastures new." At first they came by ones and twos about fifty feet above the ground, borne very gently along with outspread pinions on a soft northeast breeze; but these were only the scouts of the main army, and soon they were passing by hundreds and thousands overhead, all apparently with one mind taking an undeviating course over hill and dale. Some object they must have had in view, but what it was would be very difficult to say, for nothing but lonely tracts of jungle lay in their path, and then the open sea. The wind was certainly not sufficiently strong to be sweeping them by, whether they wished it or not, and their steady flight and the way in which they seemed to be economizing their powers appeared to indicate a purpose to travel far before their destination was reached. Amongst others, there were large numbers of *Papilio erithonius* and *Papilio pammon*, and many *Pierides*; but the majority were too high to be recognized with any certainty. It was a wonderful sight, not easily forgotten, and during the two hours while the flight

lasted, many hundreds of thousands must have passed over the spot where I stood, the whole column stretching far and wide.

One has little time, however, for studying natural history or anything of the sort on a new estate. The work is never ceasing, and the opportunities are nothing like those enjoyed by Englishmen in most other occupations. Then, too, this season was exceptionally wet, for the rain stored up its forces and, after being much overdue, made up for lost time by descending in deluges. So copious a rainfall sent down the price of rice and grains in the markets of the low country, but it will be a long time before the coolies recover from the effects of the recent famines and high rates.

It is scarcely understood at what a low ebb, even in times of prosperity, the common people of India live. The natives of India live from hand to mouth, often in fact eating what they never earned, and running into debt. Not so very many years ago they were predial slaves, changing masters according as the land on which they lived changed owners; but the advent of British rule has changed this, and now the coolie gets the same wages as

before, lives as he has lived for the last five hundred years, is free to wander where he likes, and when hard times come, having no master, he is also free to take care of himself, in which he conspicuously fails. He is about as successful a free man as a child of six would be if released from the "barbarous trammels" of the nursery and told to enjoy the glorious privilege of looking after itself. Our friend the coolie, when he works for native ryots or cultivators of the soil, rarely takes his wages in coin of the realm, but is glad to receive as much coarse grain as will keep him and his household from day to day. He is a decided anti-Malthusian—marries early and rears large families, utterly heedless of to-morrow, his greatest windfalls the few rupees he receives as a present from his employer when the latter has a feast-day, and his highest ambition to buy his wife bangles and to outshine his neighbours at marriages and ceremonies. He never has any money, and, if he had, would not keep it a month. As long as food is cheap, he gets on fairly well, and even spares a little rice as an offering on the shrine of his household god, or goes to the extent of spending an anna in

red ochre to ornament the samee; but when the Indian seasons go wrong, it fares very hard with the coolie. The rain holds back when it ought to fall, or descends in torrents when it is not wanted, and the harvest is bad. There is perhaps no grass, and then the cattle die of starvation far and wide. The coolie's labour grows worthless like himself, and as nobody has any capital invested in him, nobody cares what becomes of him, except perhaps the Government, and as there are probably no railways and few roads near his village, the Government may be said to be far off, wherever situated. He could save himself if he would move from the spot where all his life has been spent, but he clings to it wildly. He will not go to the relief works, where plenty of work and a little food is to be had. He will not confess himself a pauper and seek the famine camps; he will not even move up to the demon-haunted jungles, and enlist under the banners of the hardy Englishmen who are waging war against the fever-mists in these gloomy regions. So he wanders backwards and forwards, and picks the bones of his fellow-workmen, the buffaloes, along with the dogs and hyenas, and when those same

ribs are clean and white, he turns herbivorous and chews the leaves of trees, small weeds, and the heart of the aloe; and if this does not kill him straight off by an attack of cholera or famine diarrhœa, he may at last crawl to the nearest relief camp or plantation. But by this time he is run out; his thread of life is spun too fine—he has no inside; continued starvation has burnt it up, and he is nothing but an animate mummy, a skeleton wrapped in very dirty brown leather.

The extent of the late famine, and the difficulties of the Government in affording relief, may be better understood when it is remembered that in the Madras Presidency alone some three or four millions of natives find it hard enough to live in times of prosperity, when their food grains are selling at sixty to eighty pounds per rupee. When famine comes, and only from ten to fifteen pounds of the same food-stuff can be obtained for the same sum, as was the case during the last months of 1877, the nature of the distress and the task of the Government may be understood. It was not the fault of the natives, excepting in a negative way, inasmuch as they did very little to help themselves; and

still less is it the fault of the landlords, who support their labourers as long as they can, but the stern laws of self-preservation compel them to be turned adrift at last. It is, first of all, due to the defective rainfall, and, secondly, to the fearful poverty and lack of resources of the natives. Both these causes can be modified to a great extent, by a Government formed on the best of all principles, a mild despotism. If the Government would use a little compulsion on the native farmers in the matter of well-digging and tree-planting, great results might be attained. Nobody now doubts the benefits to be derived from these two works. As to the wells, we have it on good authority that, at a depth of forty feet, water is to be found over nearly the whole of Southern India. Out of twenty-nine shafts sunk in the centre of the famine district during the worst part of the drought, in only two cases was no water found. Thus man and beast were dying by hundreds on the parched surface of the land, because no vegetation would grow for lack of water, while that precious element was stored in natural reservoirs directly below them. But even with numerous efficient wells, little good would re-

sult, except to the immediate neighbourhood, unless the old-fashioned mode of drawing water was sternly suppressed, and something better introduced. Of course the natives would not like it at first, but a little gentle compulsion might cause a great improvement. The result of well-digging would be immediate, but judicious tree-planting would not bring much effect for a considerable period, and would need to be practised over a wide area before much good would be derived. Nevertheless, no one who has given the subject any consideration will deny the usefulness of vegetation in regulating and encouraging the rainfall of a country. If rain-laden clouds pass over bare arid plains and meet no condensing surfaces, they carry their precious contents on, until forests, mountains, or the sea cause them to disburden themselves. As an instance, the Cape Verd Islands were once arid rocks, such as Aden or Perim, but when trees were planted there, the vapour-carrying Atlantic clouds began to linger about them, and now the islands enjoy a very fair, moist climate. For the same reason, the western side of the Ghauts which run down the Indian coast are always distinguished by a

rainfall much in excess of the inland districts. Trees keep the surface cool and moist, and to a great extent prevent sudden and disastrous floods. Their uses to the natives of Southern India do not stop here. Very frequently their fruit will afford nourishment in hard times; their leaves are food for cattle, or make fuel and great reserves of leaf-mould for mixing with other manures and enriching the otherwise barren fields, and, besides these, have many collateral uses. The great difficulty is to get trees planted. Every one likes to cut them down without hindrance, for the sake of timber, but no one cares to plant others, as the profit will not appear for several years. Consequently, before the Government Forest Department took matters seriously in hand, the land was being rapidly laid bare to the sun, and might in course of time have been reduced to the condition of a sandy desert, for the smaller vegetation shares alike the good or bad fortunes of the heavier growths. At present some check has been placed upon this ruinous wastefulness, but what is wanted now is a thorough system of tree-planting wherever the rainfall is deficient. Some small tax should be remitted, and in its

stead a certain number of trees ordered to be planted by each ryot. The money-lenders might be made to contribute something towards the well-digging and tree-growing, by a small charge on every transaction they have with the villagers. The famines, alas! do not simply reduce the people to starvation and kill them off like flies, but they come attended by diseases of all sorts, and leave behind them, when they pass away, a vast legacy of sickness and weakness. Our own coolies on the estate bore only too clear a witness to how long an effort they had made before they had arrived there, showing in their wasted strength and attenuated forms how doubtful the struggle would be to regain their former condition.

With such material the difficulty of working a new estate may be understood, especially by those who have had some experience of natives. My presence was essential, everywhere and all day, to get anything done, and even when on the spot the work accomplished by most of my coolies would have made an English navvy laugh. I once found three men engaged on the roots of a small jack tree which had to be removed. It was a mere sapling, but they

had been squatting on their heels round it for half an hour, feebly picking at the soil with their mamôties; and probably they would have gone on for half an hour more, and eventually left it against another day; but happening to pass along, and being somewhat disgusted at their slowness, I laid hold of the small stem, twisted it once round, and pulled it out of the ground with a jerk, and, flinging it into a neighbouring nullah, left the coolies gazing blankly at the empty hole.

The women and children proved especially troublesome, since they were the very essence of feebleness and stupidity; but it was necessary to get some work out of them, as they were drawing full wages, and yet, of course, it was impossible to speak so roughly to them as to the men. Still they seemed to stand in considerable awe of me, and did their best while I was actually watching; at a pace, however, which showed only too clearly it could not be maintained when my back was turned.

Another difficulty was doctoring the sick. Being totally inexperienced at this sort of duty, I was often in great perplexity, with no one to consult or ask advice of. But Nature,

with some slight assistance, more or less adroit, from me, made a number of surprising cures. Many cases, however, were past the mending of any earthly doctor, and in one week fourteen coolies died in the "lines" within a stone's throw of my bungalow. Nearly every weekly report sent down to the agents at Palghaut contained the record of many deaths in brief totals, such as "died during the week—men, 5; women, 3; and children, 6," or whatever the numbers might be. They dropped out of the ranks to be buried in the nearest strip of jungle, and nobody knew whence they came or who they were. The most fatal disease was famine diarrhœa, which bears a great resemblance to common cholera; in fact, I do not know where the certain line can be drawn between them, except that the muscular cramps which are so fearfully characteristic of the latter are not present to any great extent in the malady brought on by famine and long privation. But there is little to choose between them in appearance, and the end often comes suddenly with both. In one case I was fetched to see a man who had been working in the clearing in the morning, but had been brought to the

"lines" with all the symptoms of cholera morbus. He was obviously very far gone, and I went to the hut to get what medicine I could think of, but before it was mixed a maistry came up, salaamed, and said it was too late—the man was dead. This was by no means an isolated case. Every night (they had a peculiar habit of dying at night) one or more took the great plunge into the Unknown. Perhaps it was the chills of the evening killed them; at all events, the half-caste clerk was always wondering who would die before sunrise, when the day's work was over. One night he was in my bungalow, standing at my elbow and explaining some entries made in the account books before my arrival, when he suddenly paused in a long sum and said, "Hark, sahib!" The night was windy and wet, the rain was pelting against the matting, the wind was howling among the trees and finding its way into the hut at twenty holes, making my lamp flicker and the cobwebs wave about overhead. I listened, but nothing was to be heard for a time, except the continual sound of the monsoon storm; until, all of a sudden, there was a most ghostly hoot, and then a rattling laugh, from

the trees on the neighbouring hillside about a hundred yards away. "Do you hear it, sahib?" said the half-caste. "It is the devil's messenger, and a coolie is dying, and the thing that makes that noise is waiting to take his spirit." Of course, I told him that was nonsense—probably it was some owl or nightjar disturbed from a snug retreat by a tree falling; but he was obviously unshaken in his barbarous belief, and all the multiplication and division were knocked clean out of his head, so that I had to give him some arrack punch and send him to his shed.

As I lay on my hard, badly jointed board cot, with the rain pelting against the single thickness of matting a few inches from my head, I listened intently to hear the unearthly sound again, but without success, and when I met the "writer" the next morning, asked him if any one had died to fulfil his prophecy. He said it was so—two coolies had died close together the evening before; so I had to pocket my scepticism and change the subject.

On another evening there was a new disturbance of a different kind. I had gone to bed, and everything was still and quiet, as it did not

happen to be raining just then, although it was intensely dark; when, all of a sudden, there rose a sound like a loud blast on a brass trumpet from the direction of the coolie "lines," and the moment after "Sheitan" burst in and cried, "Sahib, sahib, the elephants are coming!" I sprang up, and, seizing a rifle and stuffing into it a cartridge, ran out in my flannel sleeping-suit and slippers. By the time I got down to the "lines" every single coolie in the place was howling and shouting at the top of his voice, while one or two were throwing lighted torches about, to the great danger of the thatches. There was nothing else to be seen, however, and as no elephant could stay in the neighbourhood of such a row, and as I did not care about a midnight hunt in slippers and sleeping gear, I beat a retreat and turned in again. On investigation the following morning, it turned out that an old she elephant, and a young one about eighteen months old, had come down the hillside, forded a small shallow stream at the bottom, and ascended into the coolie "lines." Probably they were all in amongst the huts on account of the darkness, before they knew whither they had strayed, though they ought to have been warned by the

extremely powerful odour which pervades any locality inhabited by natives. There were their footmarks anyhow, all over the place, some of them twenty by eighteen inches across, and from this the size of the old elephant can be calculated. In one place they had been within five yards of a hut occupied by two families of coolies, and had stepped upon and broken two large earthenware chatties left out overnight. A little further on, the fore foot of the larger animal had rested on the edge of a rough earth embankment forming a sort of raised causeway in front of a line of huts, and the ponderous weight had brought it down with a run. Every one of the coolies seemed to have been equally frightened, although only two or three had actually seen the animals.

CHAPTER V.

BUILDING TABERNACLES.

For the next week or so my work was varied by extensive lopping and burning operations on Bungalow Hill. This is a spur of the high range which bounds the estate on the north-east, and was selected as a site for the "pucka" bungalow on account of standing centrally placed in the middle of the estate, and being some two hundred feet above the surrounding country, which should make it fairly healthy. The only hills which overtop it are the high forest-clad cone of "Hootcha Mullah" to the eastward within this property, and to the north-west, across the Manalora stream (which is our boundary in that direction), the rocky grass-covered heights of the Pardagherry Mountain. On this same hill, and just visible from where I have been working lately, is a wonderful bare

precipice, with a wall of rock some three hundred feet in height. Directly underneath, almost sheltered from the rain by the overhanging cliff above, with the help of a telescope it is possible to make out the picturesque little straw-thatched hut of another English planter, S——, who lived there by himself—the greatest hermit of us all.

The view was extensive whichever way one looked. To right and left the high mountain just mentioned shut off the quarter of each monsoon, and looking southward down the winding valley of the Manalora, the eye ranged over long expanses of unclaimed jungle stretching right away to Cape Comorin. We were, in fact, the most southerly of all the estates in this direction, and beyond us was a wilderness, the home of the bison and elephant, all "impenetrable jungle." To the north-east we looked along the course of the road, which leads here over half a dozen estates, buried in deep frames of jungle, each with its little white bungalow and dusky coolie "lines;" and amid most one caught here and there the flashing of a pool or streamlet, the all-important water for turning the pulping machinery and supplying the

coolies. Farther away the ghaut road began, and, the hills sloping down, nothing more was seen of the forest until the lowlands unrolled themselves, stretching far away like a wonderful fabric of green and silver cloth. At this distance the towns and villages could not be made out, but just where the great Southern Indian plain was melting away into indistinguishable distance, the great towering Neilgherry Mountains rose up, ascending tier above tier into the sky.

Hither each morning I made my way, at the head of a long array of axe and bill men, threading the narrow path, while the mist still hung about, and every spider's web was beaded with a thousand glittering liquid diamonds, until the hill-top was reached. There I stopped for a moment to admire the view, while the maistries got the coolies into working parties. But there was not much time for meditating on the beauties of nature, for much had to be done before any attempt could be made to build on this commanding spur. The forest which clothed it was cut down some six months ago, and presented the usual scene of wild confusion; but, for some reason, when the three months

of drying had been allowed and fire was applied, the burn proved a failure. The flames ran rapidly over the clearing, and consumed all the leaves and lighter stuff without touching the heavier timber, which, of course, cannot be burnt as it lies, unless a great heat is obtained by the embers of the smaller materials. So it became necessary to lop up everything and burn it by instalments—a long job, and needing all the best labour on the estate. As soon as we arrived, the ashes of yesterday's fires were raked together and carefully nursed into a blaze by the skilful coolies, and then twelve or fifteen tiny columns of thin grey smoke curled up in the still morning air, and soon the ring of the axes was heard and the crackling of sticks, as the fires gained height and strength, and the coolies no longer enjoyed poking them, but threw on logs and branches from a respectful distance. By the time the sun came up we were encanopied in a dense curtain of yellow smoke, through which at first he shone only feebly, but when he got higher and stronger and glared on us from above, his rays, added to the heat of the now roaring bonfires, produced a result never to be forgotten. Nearly every

day I was subjected to a temperature high enough, one could almost fancy, to cook a chop very nicely, and besides this I was continually choked with smoke, blinded with clouds of hot white ashes, and stifled with the fumes of hundreds of strange weeds and herbs. I went to work in the morning fresh, clean, and neat, in white linen jacket and trousers, with nicely polished top-boots and a snowy pith helmet, but when breakfast time came nothing could present a more striking contrast than my appearance. My clothes were torn, soiled with earth, and marked from head to foot with charcoal. My hair was powdered thickly with white ashes, and my face and hands about the colour of a coolie's skin with smoke and dust. It was useless to wash until the day's work was done, so I usually breakfasted as I stood, and one of the planters, dropping in to see me one day at the mid-day meal, exclaimed as soon as he had dismounted and entered my hut, "Why, Arnold, what have you been doing? you look like a coal-heaver!" And I am afraid I did.

The coolies do not seem to find the heat too much for them; they possess the advantage of working entirely without clothes, and perspire

freely, the moisture running down their bare bodies and cutting channels in the charcoal dust and ashes, until they afford a most curious picture. But the superintendent is clothed, and has to be continually on the move amongst the fires, now crawling under charred logs on hands and knees, and now reaching a distant part of the clearing by walking along the tree-trunks and leaping from one to the other. While engaged in this latter way, I had a spill which might have resulted in serious consequences. Wishing to cross the crown of the hill, where the fires were burning fiercely, to see what a party of coolies on the opposite side were doing, I climbed up on a log of peepul wood lying across a lot of others, and, running and jumping from stem to stem, had nearly got through safely, but, being half blinded and choked with the dense yellow smoke and fearful heat, I dropped off one log, without due caution, on to another four feet below, thinking it was sound; but the fire had eaten along through the whole tree, leaving a glowing mass of burning embers and about half an inch of green bark all round. Directly my feet touched the trunk it gave way, and I came head over

heels to the ground, amid a blinding cloud of smoke, dust, and ashes. The only damage done was a few holes burnt in my clothes and one or two scorches on my hands, while, if it were possible, my clothes were grimier than ever.

It was impossible, however, to control the work successfully all over the estate for long with only my slight knowledge of the language; and after a spell of hard uphill work, I wrote to Calicut to say that, as Mr. R—— would not probably be back for several months, the interests of the estate imperatively demanded there should be some one on it who had had more experience than had fallen to my share of the various operations, and who could speak the languages of the coolies. To this a reply was sent, allowing that the work was very hard for an unseasoned chickdoree, and stating that as there was an unattached Englishman in the district—a brother of D——, of Polyampara—who had had considerable experience, he would soon be associated with me, if possible. Shortly afterwards my new acquaintance, E. D——, wrote to say he had accepted a temporary position on the estate, and would come over in heavy marching order the next day.

So I made a few preparations, rigged up another bunk, ordered an extra supply of provisions from Wallenghay; and while seated at breakfast one morning, I was aroused by the arrival of a long string of coolie women loaded with pots, pans, bedding, and general effects, and behind them marched an Englishman, whom I immediately recognized as one with whom I had tiffined on first landing at the club-house, Calicut. So we fraternized readily, and, having stowed the new arrival's kit, proceeded to breakfast, and then discussed future plans over our cheroots. My friend's build and stature—much like that of the robust Ghoorkhas of Northern India,—five feet nothing in height, by three feet broad—gave great promise of energy, which was not lessened by the fact that he was a Cornishman. He brought a servant with him, which was fortunate, as "Sheitan's" cooking was very poor and his habits horrible. It was impossible to get any respect for cleanliness into that "boy's" head, and he had a most free and easy way with my property—breaking my small stock of china, cutting the stitches of the soles of my boots when he scraped the mud off, with several other offences, besides the expense which his

numerous "mothers" caused me by eating my provisions.

One of the very few creatures which I had shot since reaching the estate was a specimen of the magnificent Malabar squirrel, *Sciurus maximus.* This extremely handsome animal is as large as a full-grown hare, with the richest soft-furred skin, mahogany colour on the back, striped with a broad black band on either side, and warm yellow underneath. The ears are ample and fringed with long hairs, the eyes large and hazel-coloured, while the face combines all the colours of the body in stripes. They utter a curious grunting sound when calling to each other, but are silent when alarmed, and glide from branch to branch, only betraying their presence by shaking the leaves and twigs when they spring. The first specimen I secured was feeding far up among the thick foliage of a jack tree, and would have been passed unnoticed, but for husks of broken seeds which kept falling to the ground as the squirrel unshelled the fruit. Even then it was no easy matter to make him out at the elevation.

I must also plead guilty to having shot two or three of the great black monkeys which

abound in these jungles during the wet monsoon, but I always had a feeling of quasi-homicide when one was shot—they bear such wonderfully human faces, and they behave in much the same way as a human being might. Hearing some chattering in the tree-tops once, I went to the spot, and coming suddenly into view of one old monkey, he seemed to know that hiding was safer than flying under the circumstances, so, seizing hold of a leafy bough above, he drew it down until his head and shoulders were quite hidden; but it did not occur to him that all the rest of his body was exposed—his "untutored mind" fancied that if he could not see me, it followed naturally that he himself must be invisible,—much the same argument as those philosophers use who deny the existence of a spiritual world. The size of these monkeys is enormous when their arboreal life is taken into account. Many of them are as large as a retriever dog, and must weigh seventy or eighty pounds at the least. One that I shot was a monster, who taxed all my energies to get the carcass back half a mile to the bungalow, and when I threw him down in the verandah, I vowed he could be little

under a hundred pounds. In colour they are jet black; the old males, however, carry a white frill round the neck and a white front. Their tails are long—as long as the body, but never used, as far as I have observed, for prehension; in fact, they are generally dragged behind their possessor in a careless sort of way, and when the monkey runs along a branch they wave to and fro in a very aimless manner. Their skins form excellent carriage rugs and mats, but are too coarse for wraps or cloaks. There is also a very considerable difficulty in preserving and drying them properly in the jungle, owing to the continual dampness of the atmosphere, which makes anything resembling leather very mouldy in a short time. Monkeys are numbered amongst the foes of the coffee planter, as they make free with the sweet ripe berries, the stones of which are frequently found dry and clean, in lines, under branches and fallen trees, having passed uninjured through their digestive arrangements; and such seeds, old planters will tell you, make the very choicest coffee. The coolies eat monkey flesh quite freely—a sure proof their religion is not related to that of the Hindoos

—and whenever my gun brings one down, there is a great deal of salaaming around me, and anxious inquiries as to how I am going to dispose of the body. Indeed, I tried the "devilled" leg of a young monkey myself at breakfast one morning, and it was not bad; probably a hungry man might enjoy it very much. The native superintendent of the Dewan of Cochin's estate, the next one to the north of ours, employed a man to wander about in the jungles with a rusty musket, with which he shot the monkeys as they fed in the tree-tops, and got a small reward per skin. One day he came to my hut to know if I had any skins to sell him, but our commercial positions were reversed, as I bought all the fifteen which he had with him for a couple of rupees—considerably more than he would have obtained from the Dewan.

Another creature which only puts in an appearance when the days are growing brighter and hotter, is the gay little striped squirrel, a first cousin of the palm-squirrel of the plains, but rather darker in colour, and known to science by the name of *Sciurus trivittatus*. This does little harm to new estates, as it con-

fines its attention, like the monkeys, to the ripe berries, and I am always glad to see their lithe little forms darting along the fallen timber, pulling up for half a moment to see what the enemy is doing, and then, with a flick of the bushy little tail and a few sharp chirrups, vanishing into some hollow or broken bough. They make themselves wonderfully at home, especially on the outskirts of the clearings, where the timber is half overgrown by weeds and bushes; but curiously, though I have seen scores in such places, I never observed one climbing a standing tree—a proof they are not actually the same as the lowland squirrel, who spends all his time on the trunk and branches of his arboreal home.

We were naturally glad to see these little animals, as they are the heralds of the spring on the hills, and when they came we knew that the cool weather was close upon us, and we were so delighted at the prospect of a little blue sky and warmth after several months of perpetual rain and chilly mist, that we were not afraid even of the advent of the hot season which would follow.

Pardagherry Mountain, opposite to my hut,

grew greener and greener every day, and presented a lovely spectacle, all the more alluring as it seemed so inaccessible. It appeared to be a vast expanse of mingled rocks and grass, with here and there a patch of jungle or reeds fringing some watercourse. In one place there was a sheer precipice of some hundred feet high, over which a foaming stream was for ever falling in a silver streak. When it rained the cascade swelled wide and broad, showing up well against the grey rock, and when the rain ceased it dwindled into a thread of water scarcely visible at the distance; but it flowed more or less all the year round, and R——'s son tells me he has seen the dusky masses of a herd of elephants crossing the sky-line of the hill in the early morning, after having probably spent the night playing in the basin at its foot. It was a lovely stream, and some day I hoped to explore its course, and—

"Follow the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Indian deep."

That same hill-top, though but seldom visited, has been on one of those rare occasions the

scene of a mournful event, which deprived the world of a brave English lady. Even her name is unknown to me, but, as I heard the story, she was the wife of a collector, or perhaps forest overseer, and with her husband and a few servants had ascended to the unknown wilds which overhang the estates of S——, about three miles from Pardagherry. As sunset was coming on one day, the Englishman rode on ahead to choose a camping ground, leaving the lady, also mounted, to follow more leisurely. The former galloped up to a pleasant spot by a reedy stream, and was just congratulating himself on such a favoured locality, when a small herd of elephants at rest under the trees hard by saw him, and broke back as fast as they could go by the path hemmed in with rocks on either side, up which the English lady was advancing. The panic-stricken herd charged down, and before any warning was given rushed upon the little party in the narrow path. The native servants, being on foot, escaped among the rocks; but the lady's horse shied, threw her, and fled before the elephants down the pass. The whole herd passed over the unfortunate Englishwoman,

who had so pluckily followed her husband into these wild regions, and she died a few minutes after he came up; so the sylvan camping-place must have been sorrowful enough that night.

My friend "Charlie" returned from the lowlands after a time, having recovered from his gun accident, and began to open a small "nursery" for one of the planters on the other side of the Manalora stream, opposite to our territory. Besides him another young Englishman, L——, turned up and stayed on the estate for some time, until he could break some more land to the south of us for another company. Thus southward the course of civilization takes its way, and Pardagherry was no longer *Ultima Thule*, but was left behind by L——'s new place, which, on account of the difficulty of access, its solitude, and deadly fever-mists, we named the "Bitter End." L——, however, was a plucky fellow. He left the Varlavachen Bungalow, the eyrie of F——, my acquaintance of Palghaut, perched upon the summit of a steep mountain, and descended to our low-lying hut, where no one could stay long without contracting jungle-fever. Though he did not say so, it is obvious he thought very

lightly of our style of life; and, in fact, the four of us were packed about as tightly as could be in our little hut. We got on well enough during the day, as we were all employed in the jungles except just at meal times; but when night came and we turned in, it was a tight fit. Our four berths, placed side by side across the sleeping apartment, completely filled it up, with the spaces occupied by the box which did duty for a washing-stand and one shaky chair. We were always dreadfully tired after the day's work, and soon after dinner retired to our couches, made of nothing softer than unplaned teak-boards supported on biscuit-boxes. Soon four forms might have been seen by the dim light of the lantern swinging overhead, each in a flannel sleeping-suit, and rolled up in grey blankets, with a long cheroot between each pair of lips. D—— had an accordion, which he generally brought to bed with him, and in the solemn stillness of the night, when the jungles were buried in darkness, and tigers and elephants roamed about as they listed, the strains of many songs went up in a fitful manner from our hut. If the coolies listened they must have had a poor opinion of us as a musical

nation, for D—— was only a beginner on his instrument, and rarely got safely through more than two or three notes, when he recommenced, or broke off to tell us we were singing out of tune. It was the most mournful affair trying to follow him, for he had to go very slowly and think beforehand on each note; so as our cheroots burnt down, he had things more and more his own way, till, finding us dozing, he generally attempted a lively "God save the Queen," by way of *finale*. A sleepy sort of idea that we ought to stand up and take our hats off pervaded us, but, on the whole, we did not think her Majesty would mind the omission, and soon silence settled down and suppressed even D——'s melancholy instrument.

I have mentioned one evening on which there was an alarm of elephants. On another, as we were all asleep, a great noise suddenly broke out in the coolie "lines," and we heard the natives shouting, "Hatti! hatti!"—"Elephants;" so we turned out as quickly as we could. I and L——, who were sleeping in neighbouring bunks, being only half awake, and no light burning, by some mischance seized upon the same pair of trousers. He monopolized one

leg and I the other, and the natural result was that when we tried to get up we came a heavy cropper on the floor, which effectually woke us, and we sat facing each other for some moments, wondering what was the matter. At last we exclaimed together, "What are you doing with my trousers?" Meanwhile, D—— had taken down a rifle from the pegs, and had run out to get a shot if possible; but "Charlie" spoiled his chance by groping to the head of my bed, and, without a word of warning, pulling the string attached to the spring gun outside, which he had loaded the day before with a couple of handfuls of native powder and part of an old sock rammed tightly over the bullet. The result was a terrific explosion, which seemed to frighten both the elephants and the coolies, for all other sounds died away immediately afterwards, and we were left to finish the night in peace.

But an undisturbed night was quite the exception. On one occasion a great cackling arose amongst some cocks and hens that we kept in a small shed, and, turning out with revolvers and sticks, we found an animal about the size of a large cat had broken in and killed three of

our fowls, to the great consternation of the others. After a hunt, "Charlie" saw the beast escaping along a bough overhead, and brought him down with a shot from my revolver. We were also considerably troubled with rats, which played nocturnal games on our beds, and even nibbled us when they got the chance; so we borrowed a cat from Mrs. F—— of Varlavachen —a real English cat, who became a great pet— and it kept the rats somewhat in order. One night, as I was lying in my cot with the lamp dimly burning, a large rat came out, and, after wandering about the floor, jumped into a tin bucket. Just at that moment the cat came in, and, catching sight of the disappearing tail, proceeded to stalk the bucket in a very scientific style; but some slight sound alarmed the rat, and I saw him jump out and run away on the off side. Meanwhile the cat, who felt sure of getting him, and had not observed this, crept to within a couple of paces, and then, gently lashing her tail from side to side and gathering her limbs under her, measured the distance, and with a single bound leapt right into the pail. Of course, there was nothing there, and I never saw a creature look so supremely astonished as

she did. On windy nights our sleep was broken by the rubbing of the trees together, and by the long rattan creepers swinging to and fro and striking against each other, with the occasional falling of branches or trees—a danger to which we were exposed during the whole of the monsoon. If the elements were at rest, the insect world woke up and treated us to animated concerts of most mingled sounds; but fatigue is a good narcotic, and we paid at last very small attention to such things.

An occupation which now took up some of my time was fixing supports to the young coffee trees of two years old, which were growing into considerable bushes with thick heads of glossy dark green leaves. In spite of the belts of jungle left between the clearings, the plants feel the wind more or less, and when the ground is wet it swings them round and round, so that the stem works an opening in the soil just where it comes above ground. Then, if there should be any breeze on the next hot day, when the ground is baked hard by the sun, the plant chafes against this rim, cuts through its tender young bark, and very speedily dies. So we have to support it by driving in a three-foot

stick, sloping towards the plant from the direction of the south-west monsoon, and firmly but gently tying them together with a thin rattan fibre, or the bark of a tree which grows wild in the jungles.

A considerable number of men were also employed at various parts of the estate, cutting down young saplings of ten or twelve years' growth, chopping them into lengths of two feet, and then splitting the logs into light pegs, which were to be used for marking new pits when more clearings were opened. D—— says each man ought to make three hundred pegs a day, and the assistant superintendent ought to count them! Quite an impossibility! but this is the sort of thing one picks up by reading books on coffee planting; a little rough experience, however, takes the gloss off such book learning. My associate had some attacks of fever after arriving at the estate, which kept his liver in a chronic state of disturbance; in fact, he said no one can stay out in the jungle long without losing his liver altogether. I asked him if that was not rather serious, as the liver, with all its faults, is commonly supposed to be a useful part of one's internal arrange-

ments; but he averred—and he ought to know—that one can get on quite comfortably without any. However, he seemed to part with his own reluctantly—it would have been a good thing, in fact, if he had had none left—for each attack irritated the little he believed there was remaining, and then everybody, from the "cook boy" to the smallest coolie, got into trouble.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRACKLESS WOODS.

I SPENT some spare hours in decorating the interior of my new hut, as much as circumstances would permit, with pictures, pipe-racks, guns, and all the paraphernalia of an entomologist and sportsman. When this æsthetic effort suddenly burst upon the view of a new native servant whom I had engaged, he stood spell-bound; he clearly thought it was the most beautiful abode ever built, for he was only a "country servant," hailing from Wallenghay. The coolies too, when they were mustered in front of my open door in the morning, were petrified with astonishment, and seemed to think it a sort of international exhibition. On one wall I painted a "life-size" fresco of a modern sixty-inch bicycle, to keep me in memory of a former amusement, and of this the coolies

stood in great awe. My "boy" told me they held it to be my "samee" or holy place, and were under the impression I made "puja," or prayers, and offered half my dinner to this image every day. The pictures attracted them very much—they like anything coloured; so I at once gave them some vividly tinted English advertisements, with blue and white bills having "Daily Telegraph, Largest Circulation in the World," printed on them, which they forthwith hung up in their "lines." I also showed some of the maistries one or two of the full-page engravings in numbers of the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*, representing fights between Turks and Russians on the Danube. They were immensely interested, crowding round each picture in a dense circle of black faces, and nodding their heads and pointing to each incident in the picture with their dusky fingers. Only one of them, Jowra, the headman of the estate, had any idea of who the combatants really were; the others recognized some as "Inglish" by their pale faces, and the Turks were supposed to be outer barbarians of a distant country with whom the sahibs had some unknown quarrel. I put them on the

right track with the help of my new "boy," who spoke English well, besides his native Tamil, and they seemed to be much impressed.

My luggage and new furniture for the hut also now came up. It is usual for a company to supply the assistant superintendent with furniture and bedding, of which he has the free use, but such things are considered fixtures of the estate, and pass from successor to successor. It was a very welcome sight when the long string of coolies came winding down the jungle path with chairs, bedsteads, washing-stands, tables, etc., slung on poles and carried on their shoulders, and upon their arrival there was a grand unpacking forthwith. Everything seemed to be made of the bright yellow jack-wood, which is abundant, works well, and does not shrink; but the thing which pleased me most was a silk-cotton mattress, which I thought a bed fit for an emperor, and thoroughly appreciated that night, after two months of sleeping on bare planks. There was a difficulty, however, in stowing all the things away in my small residence, as they were intended for the larger and permanent bungalow; but this was

a new inconvenience to suffer from, and the change was very agreeable.

On the 12th of December we commenced a road which was to be made from the southern slope of Bungalow Hill right away, without pause or stoppage, to the head of the ghaut. It had already been "traced" for some distance, and half formed through the jungle which separated our estate from the next one to the northward. This bit, which follows the winding of the Manalora stream, was about the most picturesque spot in the neighbourhood, and best satisfied my idea of what a glade in the tropics ought to look like. Hitherto, I must confess, I had been considerably disappointed with the "gorgeous East," which had never seemed to me quite up to the mark; but this road presented a much richer variety of ferns and vegetation than almost any other spot yet visited. The way wound along the steep side of a "hanger," as Gilbert White would call it—a high ridge, on the crest of which, but of course completely hidden by the forest, is the old "Top Entrance Road," this new road being designated by the name of the "Lower Entrance Road." On the other side, our moun-

tain river went dashing and tumbling, now plunging into some dense thicket of tangled herbage and feathery bamboos, where it was quite invisible, though it could be heard murmuring along, and then again sparkling out into the sunshine and breaking into twenty little streamlets among the rocks; but soon reuniting and continuing its progress among beds of waving reeds and tall grasses, beneath shady banks, where it ran more slowly under the graceful tree-ferns that swung their fronds over the water and, Narcissus-like, spent their existence in watching their own reflections. In one place a great tree had fallen across, dragging down to ruin with it three smaller ones, and together their leafless branches choked up the stream with a barrier impassable to anything larger than water-snakes; but the kingfishers found this a very convenient watch-tower, so that there were always a pair of them—lovely little sky-blue birds—perched among the twigs, their beautiful plumage contrasting well with the decaying branches. But they were shy and did not like visitors, dropping off their perches and skimming down the stream with lightning-like speed when any one approached. If I were

a little fish, I would rather be eaten by so bright a bird than by a gormandizing old pike. The stream did not glide along in untroubled stillness, but its course was broken in many places by waterfalls of varying dimensions, all picturesque, and scores of little rivulets falling into the main stream on either side. These troubled us in an unromantic way when they were on our bank, as they washed away the soil and left deep hollows, which we had some difficulty in passing, as they were too small to be regularly bridged. We generally got over the difficulty by cutting down two small trees, laying them across the gap, and crossing them with logs placed side by side, which did very well as a temporary arrangement.

Every day for two weeks I was employed on this work with between a hundred and forty and a hundred and fifty men armed with mamôties and axes—a small army, which it took a great amount of exercise to thoroughly look after, as, owing to their being scattered in twos and threes at intervals of ten or fifteen paces, and out of sight of each other, it was necessary to be going constantly backwards and forwards. Even with this large force the road progressed

slowly on the margins of the clearings, where the fallen trees were piled three or four deep, and each had to be cut in two places and rolled away—no light labour, as may be understood. In fact, on one occasion the whole force at my disposal, some hundred and fifty men, working from sunrise to sunset, only cleared fifty yards of ground eight feet wide; and as long as the "trace" ran through the felled ground, the pace remained very slow. But after a time the unopened jungle on the borders of our plantation was reached, and, the trees here still standing, we got on better. But even so arose new difficulties. First of all, the leeches always swarmed amongst the dead leaves until these had been scraped away, and my socks were crimsoned with blood every day when I returned to breakfast, while the poor coolies spent half their time picking the vile creatures off their legs. Besides leeches, there lurked here numbers of snakes, for which the natives were constantly on the look out; but they were a matter of indifference to me, being in thick shooting-boots and leggings. The most deadly snakes, however, are said to be tree-climbers, occasionally dropping down on a person passing

beneath—rather an unpleasant idea, the only remedy against which would be to keep an umbrella constantly up. But though one may have to look below and aloft at the same time for snakes, and it may not be agreeable to feel numerous holes bored in one's legs by blood-thirsty leeches, neither of these troubles are to be compared to the results of breaking into the nest of a thriving colony of large black ants, which was once my misfortune. We came upon them quite suddenly. One of my axe-men pulled up a small bush by the roots, and disclosed a large hollow space, as big as a game-hamper, formed entirely by the industrious little people mentioned, and nearly filled with a great nest of papier-mâché-like material of a greyish colour, neatly arranged in terraces, one above the other, with corridors and numerous entrances to the inner parts. For one moment the sudden removal of the wall of their home showed the busy citizens stroking each other with their antennæ—some collected in groups round others, who may perhaps have been lecturing on domestic economy and kindred ant-subjects; while others were walking up and down the passages with

unhatched or imperfect baby ants in their jaws —clearly the nurses giving their charges a little fresh air. Others were putting things in order and executing a few necessary household repairs; while others seemed to be on guard at the mouths of the passages which led to the most secluded portions of the palace, perhaps the suite of rooms set apart for their much-loved empress. But after the first dazzling effect of the light had passed away, every citizen of the hitherto peaceful republic boiled over with wrath. Clearly they had been working, like the ancient Jews, "with hammers in their hands and javelins by their sides." Never was army mobilized so quickly! While some hurried the young and feeble into the shelter of the citadel, and others ran to call up the troops from the rear and give the alarm through the rest of the city, the remainder, several thousands strong, poured forth to give battle to the invaders, and, apparently without generals or captains, every warrior with the same object dashed at us, and, utterly regardless of life and limb, sought to fasten on our flesh and clothes. What a grand history would lie before the nation that could boast of such patriotic people!

Was ever any Roman braver than the ant who charged up my boot, and fixed his jaws so firmly into the calf of my leg, that when I pulled at him, he parted with his head rather than let go his hold? The small patriots, into whose town we had broken on this occasion, were certainly the stronger party, and I and my followers fled before them, ignominiously turning to work in another place, until, venturing back in half an hour, I found the whole colony had moved away with all the honours of war to the neighbouring jungle, where I sincerely hoped they were able to found a second city. Another disadvantage of making a dug-out road through the jungle is the curious fact that the newly turned earth gives the coolies fever with great promptitude. Man after man had to strike work and go back to the "lines" as we toiled each day. Perhaps it was owing to the chill which hangs about the moist fresh mould, or to the stores of decomposed vegetable gases which are set free. Certainly even I, who was yet too fresh from England to get actual fever, often felt very sick and uncomfortable as the work proceeded.

But, in spite of all these difficulties, we

forged ahead gradually—every day adding a hundred yards or so of neatly smoothed road, fit for bandy traffic—by the side of the sparkling Manalora, with the thick forest trees of the upper bank arching over and shading us from the mid-day sun, and creepers and rattan canes hanging in graceful festoons from tree-top to tree-top. They never flower, these climbing plants, or not in a demonstrative way, and in this I was considerably disappointed, as "flowering creepers" formed one of the most important items in my old ideas of tropical vegetation.

One evening, when sunset came and relieved us from our toil, I congratulated myself on having added a hundred yards of roadway to the total. Truly it was somewhat soft, and, though as smoothly raked as a flower-bed, it would be necessary to let it settle and consolidate before it would be fit for heavy traffic. But fate was unkind, and on arriving next morning we found the whole of our work of the day before in a most terrible mess, broken away in places and full of great holes. A closer examination showed that two or three elephants had been down during the darkness to inspect the operations, which it is quite possible they had been

watching us engaged on during the daytime; and, finding the surface smooth and pleasant, had been promenading up and down, sinking their enormous feet deep into the fresh mould at every step, and in places bringing down the sides with a run. It was interesting, as showing the inquisitive and meddlesome nature of the animals, but tiresome from a coffee planter's point of view.

One Sunday, the day being fine and hot, I and "Charlie" agreed to take our guns and call upon S——, of Nillacothy estate. So after breakfast we armed and booted ourselves, and walked over to Polyampara, shooting a couple of jungle fowl by the way, which we carried forward to replenish our friend's larder. Midway, after dropping in on W——, who was as usual smoking a big cheroot with his feet on the back of a neighbouring chair, we passed through the strong-grown ten-year-old coffee of his estate, and, gaining the jungle again, continued our walk down a rough "trace," or boundary line, made by lopping the underwood but leaving the big trees standing, until we came to a place where the stem of a huge fig tree, blown down in some previous monsoon and falling

from bank to bank of the Manalora, formed a natural bridge. This we crossed with the help of some notches cut in the upper part to make it a little less slippery, and on the other side found ourselves in our friend's "nursery," and soon after met him in all the glory of clean Sunday clothes and newly blacked boots.

Of all the estates which I had seen, this one seemed to me most typical, and best to fulfil my ideas of what a coffee estate should look like. It was much more picturesquely situated than any of the others, the ground more broken and rocky, and the young plants, which were set out in beautifully even rows from jungle to jungle, were neither so old nor ragged as those of the more northerly plantations, nor so juvenile and straggling as our own. Then the "lines" were neatly built in two rows on the crown of a little hillock, with a "writer's" bungalow at one end, and looked many times more healthy and pleasant than those amongst which my lot was cast.

Crossing the estate, our host led us through the jungle, where, for the first time in India, I saw a real flowering forest tree, covered with white camellia-like blossoms, which the light

breeze shook down on us, as we passed beneath, in a sweet-scented shower, and then a little further on we emerged into the open. After two months of the close dim jungle, and the small clearings walled in all round by dense belts of trees, it would be difficult to describe my feelings of joy on getting upon a wide grass plateau three thousand feet above the sea, with a cool wind waving the long lemon-grass and invigorating our enervated frames. The prospect was so delightful I sank down on a rock and expressed my intention of remaining there all day, but S—— assured us there were better things higher up; so we continued our climb till we scaled a steep bank, and reached the verandah of a neat little bungalow, with white chunam walls and thick thatch roof, standing close under the towering grey cliff which gives it its name. Here we breakfasted, and listened to our host's stories of all the animals which roam at night round his lonely cabin. He tells us there is a pool a few hundred yards higher up, on the northward side of the mountain, which is a favourite place with the elephants, and many a night he has been unable to sleep for the noise they make bathing and trumpeting to

each other. Sometimes a leopard comes down, and carries away chickens, or a goat, if there is one about. As for ibex and sambour deer they are always plentiful, but wild. Our host had a dog with a touch of deer-hound in him, and seeing the other day a sambour and its fawn feeding by the elephant pool, where there is some level grass, he slipped the dog at them, and witnessed an interesting spectacle. The old sambour could have escaped easily, but the young one could not go so fast, and the dog soon came up to them, and would have made short work of the little creature, but for the resolute way in which the mother kept off its attacks, walking round and round, and gradually edging towards the friendly shelter of the nearest jungle, which when they gained, they had it all their own way, and the dog came back crestfallen and beaten. Despite these splendid opportunities for sport, S—— does not shoot, for two good reasons—because he has no rifle up here, and because he says he is too near-sighted to shoot straight. My only wish was that I had such chances at Pardagherry. After tiffin, the prospect of a magnificent view over the plains tempted us to climb the lowest

spur of the precipice, about two hundred feet above the bungalow; and with our guns slung on our backs, we scrambled up, getting a foothold among the veins of quartz, which run at all angles in the face of the rock, and look as if they might hold gold; also grasping the roots of grasses, which occasionally gave way, and threatened to send us rolling back to the bungalow. But the highest possible point once gained, we were well repaid for our exertions. The Nillacothy Rock, the summit of which is four thousand feet above the sea, presents two perpendicular faces—one towards the upland valley of the coffee estates, which is, perhaps, three hundred and fifty feet above the Manalora stream, and forms a most conspicuous object from every part of the "district;" and the other face, looking due northward, is on the very edge of the ghaut, and has a sharp fall of between eight hundred and a thousand feet—a magnificent drop, which can be seen from the railway carriage windows far away on the Palghaut line. Standing as we did at the corner, we had a view such as the eagles only enjoy, and as extensive as the eye could take in. The lowlands stretched away beneath us

in a vast chequered plain, mottled with tawny paddy-fields and palm clumps, every little village, and Wallenghay nearest of all, showing up a tiny grey patch with a framing of emerald green, which we knew to be the broad-leaved bananas in the gardens round the straw-thatched huts. The tanks caught the sunlight and sparkled, and where the streams were broken up and led among the growing rice by numerous channels, there was a fine lacework of silver threads. We might have seen Calicut on the Indian Ocean, and Madras itself on the Bay of Bengal, if our eyesight had been powerful enough; but we could only look east and west till the plains mingled with the sky, and northward across the great Indian hollow to where the Wynnaad Ghauts and Neilgherries rose in lofty ridges at an elevation even greater than our own.

As we lay in the long grass, buried in silence and admiration, which life in our deep jungles made all the sincerer, there was a harsh cry, a rush of wings, and a great black eagle came down like a thunderbolt from behind—perhaps to see if we were dead and fit to be eaten—but, shifting his course when within twenty

yards of us, he went sailing away over the jungle below with widespread wings. The temptation was irresistible. My rifle was unslung, raised, and fired in a second, but the only result was one big pinion feather cut out of the eagle's wing, which came fluttering and twisting down to the ground, while the owner continued his course unmoved. Had I fired with the more accurate "express," instead of the short carbine, the result might have been different, and the noble bird who now reigns supreme on those mountain-tops, the terror of all young deer and ibex kids, might surmount nothing higher than a hat-stand in a house of a London square! Fate hangs on such little things!

When at last we had satiated ourselves with the wide view, and drank deep of the pure mountain air, we turned to go, but S—— suddenly reminded us we had forgotten something—we hadn't carved our initials anywhere! Of course we proceeded to rectify this at once, and each left a record on a flat-faced rock at the highest point we could attain. Professor Darwin or some one ought to try and explain this inveterate habit of Englishmen.

We noticed in descending that the ground about a small nullah was pounded into clay by the feet of many animals who came there nightly to drink. There were the great plate-like "spoor" of the elephants, with the marks made all round the front edge by the hard horny toenails—the toes themselves being invisible, and only contained in the substance of the foot in a rudimentary condition—the round cowlike prints of the bison, and the finer pointed hoof-stamps of the sambour deer, of which S—— showed us how to make a guess at the ages by noting the spread of the heel and the size of the gap between the points of the hoof. There were also signs of the hill ibex in abundance, and the tiny little imprints made by the hog-deer. When I first saw these, which are no larger than a dint made by the little finger of a man's hand, I should have passed them over carelessly, but my companion pointed them out, and, stooping down, I made out the clear impress of the tiny hoofs. Getting back down this nullah was a regular scramble, in which we were continually falling over logs and masses of hidden rocks, or had to force our way by sheer strength through the tangled

reeds and rushes. "Charlie," whose toe still pained him occasionally, being the shortest of the party, was quite hidden many times, and his whereabouts only to be guessed by the waving of the rank herbage. But though we beat right down the stream to where it runs by S——'s door, we put up no game, and only succeeded in making ourselves so thoroughly tired that we were glad to accept our host's pressing invitation to stay the night; and after dinner and the usual smoke, we rolled ourselves up in rugs till we looked like Egyptian mummies, and slept soundly on the floor till the first daylight appeared.

I had not been so cold as I was that next morning at daybreak for a long time. The rain was coming down, Scotch fashion, in thick drizzle, and light fleecy clouds were wandering about the hillside like flocks of masterless sheep. Some of these little clouds, which seemed to be the fragments of larger ones driven against the hillside and broken up, came floating across the grass outside and slipping amongst the trees almost as though they were animated creatures, and if I had possessed any feeling in my nose or my finger-tips, the

scene would have been very enjoyable; but, as it was, my whole attention was given to helping S—— with a brew of coffee, which very interesting operation we performed for ourselves, as the "boy" was stupefied with cold and quite useless. I asked our entertainer if the elevation of his bungalow, some 3500 feet above the sea level, did not make him secure against the attacks of jungle fever, but he said, "Nothing of the sort." Undoubtedly no fever could possibly be caught up here; but then, wherever the planter's bungalow may be, he must spend all the daytime in the valleys low down amongst the coffee, and is sure to contract fever there, sooner or later, and bring it home with him. Of course a high-built bungalow is much better than a low one, as the air is purer, the planter is kept in better health and spirits, and his attacks of fever pass off sooner; but it is certainly not a complete safeguard. I pointed out to him that our mutual friend L—— had spent a year at Varlavachen, across the valley, at an elevation of three thousand feet, and had never had fever as long as he was up there; but this, S—— believed, was because he was fresh from England and did

no work lower down. It was hard work and exposure to the sun and chills—necessities of a planter's life—which brought on fever, and he said the only thing to be done was to brave it out, and in course of time one would get rid of one's liver and become acclimatized—or find a quiet bed in the jungle, which would at least free you from the need of ever working again.

But breakfast over, we said good-bye and descended into the valley. The rain came down ceaselessly—heavier even in the coffee estates than on the open hillsides—and on getting back to Pardagherry bungalow I found there was no work being done, the wet keeping the coolies shivering in the "lines," whence thin jets of blue smoke wound upwards and hung under the thick roof of leaves. So the rest of the day was spent indoors, reading, writing, and smoking, huddled up in a woolly ulster, which I wore with as great satisfaction as I had done not many months before in Scotland.

The next day was much the same. We attempted to muster the coolies in a heavy downpour at half-past five in the morning, but none turned out except the maistries and two or three old women; so we gave these

half pay and dismissed them to the "lines," getting on as best we could, till the evening relieved us from our desperate state of *ennui* and enabled us to turn in.

The succeeding day was brighter, and the coolies mustered in force, wishing to get something to their credit before pay-day came round. So I and D—— divided them as usual, he taking his lot to the southern jungle, where he was marking out some new clearings, and I proceeding to put the finishing touches to the new road, which had now got past the intervening forest and emerged into the Dewan's estate, through which we had made arrangements for carrying it.

Walking down through the mist, still thick under the trees, I suddenly came upon the marks of a very large old bison, probably a "rogue," the footmarks being five or six inches across, and so fresh that the water was still welling up into them. Having nothing with me but an umbrella, I proceeded along cautiously, expecting to see the great animal loom through the fog every minute, or to hear him snort and charge back on me; but he kept ahead, and after a few hundred yards went down to the

river and forded it, the water being still disturbed and muddy when I got to the margin. That these animals are sometimes dangerous, more often, in fact, than any other creature in these jungles, there was sufficient proof even on the estate. As one came down the "Top Entrance Road" through the belt of trees on the way to the settlement, there was a gloomy spot, always damp and chilly in the brightest weather, where a road wound up from the Manalora side of the ridge and joined our main thoroughfare at right angles. This was called "Bison Gap," and one of the trees standing a little way back had a rough cross cut into the bark to mark the place of a bad accident. When R—— first opened the estate, some time before I joined, this was a very wild locality, in undisputed possession of the elephants and big game of all sorts. Especially there was one rogue bison of whom many bad stories were told. He was known by having uneven horns, one tending upwards and the other downwards, and this seems to have made him particularly bad tempered, so that the coolies were in constant dread of meeting him. One misty evening they were streaming home after the day's

work, with their tools on their shoulders and a maistry in front, when they came to this ill-omened spot, and there, in front of them and rubbing his horns, was the great terror of the jungle, his huge black body completely blocking the path and keeping the coolies from their homes. The natives threw down their loads and hid themselves behind trees, the maistry behind the trunk which now bears a cross; but as the bison did not move, and seemed sulkily determined to stay in the path, he came forward after a few minutes, and, waving his turban, tried to frighten the beast away. It was a fatal attempt, for the animal suddenly roused itself, and, resenting this familiarity, gave a deep snort and charged the unfortunate man. He fled to the shelter of the tree, but just as he was getting behind the bison rushed upon him and dashed him heavily against the trunk. It is to be hoped that this rendered him insensible, for the coolies from their surrounding retreats saw the savage animal pound him against the stem of the tree and amongst the roots, till he bore no resemblance to the human form; and then the beast, with its forehead drenched with blood and shreds of torn clothing on its horns,

turned and stalked away into the thickest of the jungle.

But the poor maistry was soon avenged. At that time R—— had as "cook boy" an old Madras shikarry, and the very next day the coolies brought him word that the same animal was standing under a clump of bamboo, just above what is now No. 3 clearing; so, borrowing the old long Snider—a percussion gun which forms R——'s whole battery—he loaded it with powder and two bullets, and then set out alone to interview the bison. He found him as the coolies had said, and, crawling for an hour and a half on his hands and knees, got close up to him. I believe that the bison brought his fate on himself by his sulky indifference to the presence of human beings as long as they did not molest him; for the shikarry seems to have crept within a dozen yards, when, resting the muzzle of the gun on a rock, he aimed at the broad heavy forehead of the bull, and when he pulled the trigger and the smoke cleared away, the bison was lying dead on the rocks. The company's agents at Calicut very properly gave him a reward of ten rupees for this plucky deed.

CHAPTER VII.

JUNGLE SOCIETY.

When the weather grew drier, we turned our attention in a new direction, and "pegging," "lining," and "pitting" (all very important operations in the coffee planter's list) took up the chief part of our time.

The first is an extremely tedious operation, and one which the new hand will find very difficult in thick jungle. It consists in marking out the exact spots where every coffee bush is to stand on a plot of woodland which has been only slightly cleared, and has been traced out by the trees, on what will eventually be the margin, having been slightly notched, or the leaves and rubbish scraped away. Supposing the space thus enclosed is ten acres in extent, and putting the coffee at six feet apart in each direction, there will be room for about twenty-

two thousand plants; and as the position of each has to be accurately noted with a peg stuck into the ground, the labour can be imagined. The necessary number of pegs having been split some time before and piled in heaps along the future clearing, the planter goes to work with his men, and the first thing to be done is to strike a base line right across the ground. To do this, a "level" mounted on a pointed staff, and two men with other staffs painted red and white, are needed, besides trustworthy coolies, who have hold of the opposite ends of a long fifty-foot rope, divided into six-foot lengths by tags of tape or coloured rag, as well as numerous attendants with armfuls of pegs to mark the site of the holes to be dug. The Englishman then, starting from the edge of the future belt, directs the two line coolies to hold the rope taut in the direction which the instrument tells him is straight for the opposite side of the marked-out space, and as soon as this is satisfactorily accomplished the coolies stick in pegs directly under each six-foot mark. Then the line is taken forward again to the last peg, and another set measured off. This is all very well when the ground

is clear and there are nothing but big trees to obstruct the view—a sure sign that the soil is good for coffee — but occasionally there are clumps of bamboo, thickets of thorny bushes, or, worst of all, deep nullahs; and these offer immense obstacles, not so much to the first or base line as to the subsequent ones, and if the planter's temper is at all quick, this is the work which will try it to the utmost. My companion, who was rather uncertain in that respect, gave himself several attacks of fever in trying to set the base lines out properly in the new clearings, and used to make it lively for the poor coolies, who were really not to be blamed, and had to get through places with bare legs which we ourselves did not much fancy, though booted and clothed. We came to one place, while working together, where the rocks, cropping close to the surface, left not enough soil to support many large trees, though there was a dense patch of thicket, the growth of centuries, all matted together into a wild tangle. It may perhaps be thought that it was useless to "peg" out such a place, as it could never be planted; but the truth is, every bit of a clearing must be measured off in order that the propor-

tion between the succeeding lines shall be ascertained, and so a way had to be made through the thorny labyrinth at all costs. The billmen dived in, and by vigorous exertions cut out a sort of large rabbit-run; but when they were in the centre, it was not possible to keep them straight, and three or four times they diverged to the right or left, and their hard-won drives had to be abandoned. At last I called out for D—— and the compass, and he crawled in on hands and knees, making remarks about the thorns, at every yard, more noticeable for their emphasis than grace, and then we progressed better. Before we got through the thicket, D—— at one place was on his knees, bending over the instrument, and I close behind, when I saw a long grey snake, which I recognized at once as the broad-headed and very deadly tic-polonga—the worst reptile in these jungles—hanging down from a bush, with its ugly jaws within a foot of the back of my companion's neck. He did not notice it, and the probabilities were it would strike him directly he made a move; so, taking a stick from a coolie, I crawled up, and, getting within striking distance, made a blow which killed the

snake, and considerably astonished D——, who, however, expressed his gratitude when he saw his dead enemy.

Another sort of obstruction which makes "lining" difficult in unfelled jungle are the deep and rocky watercourses or nullahs. It does not do to stretch the measuring line straight from bank to bank, as that would distort the position of subsequent lines, but it has to accurately follow the fall of the ground, which would be an easy matter with trained English labourers, but with such poor thick-headed natives as ours proves a matter of great difficulty, and took up much time. For my part, I never could understand the necessity of having the lines of coffee plants so exactly even that, from any point in the clearing, one can look up four neat roads only terminated by the belts of forest; but it is the custom, and is rigorously insisted upon in most estates, though probably it consumes more time and money than its few advantages repay.

At this work, with very little intermission or variety to enliven the monotony, the first two weeks of December were passed; and as the weather became hotter in the jungles every

day, people at home were doubtless building up larger and larger fires, and making preparations for Christmas festivities. Although the English skies may be dull, and but little of the sun to be seen, yet even on the Indian hills we were not in continual brightness, for the forests were often buried in mists and vapours all day, which made it decidedly cold and uncomfortable; or if the sun did come out, the wet jungle steamed like a damp blanket, and the heat was oppressive and unwholesome. In the morning I found it pleasant to go to work in a wrap of some kind, which was most welcome up to about ten o'clock, when the influence of the sun began to be felt, and the forests had nearly finished steaming for the day. After that hour an umbrella was more suitable in the clearings, or when superintending the work on new roads, etc. But the planter's toil is so varied and rough that he has to take things very much as he finds them, and adapt himself to the most rapid changes, from cold moist shade to the burning glare of the mid-day sunshine.

Occasionally a little adventure would happen to enliven the sameness of the work, and give

us something to talk about at breakfast. For instance, one morning I was "pegging" in a fifteen-acre clearing on the side of a very steep hill, and had taken up my stand on the broken stump of a tree, which had been struck by lightning a few years before, in order to get a better view of some coolies who were working in a nullah below. After staying there some time and "pitching into" the coolies in the liveliest language I could think of, I got down and went higher up the hillside, to see what another gang were doing. It was a fresh morning, and a strong breeze, though we could feel nothing of it below, was obviously blowing up above, from the way in which the trees were swinging about. Hardly had I gone twenty yards up the hillside when a groan echoed through the aisles of the forest, and the coolies, who seemed to know what it meant, fled right and left. Then there was another and another such sound, and I saw a great tree, a hundred feet high, tottering. I was so close, I could hear the strong fibres in the stem snapping with a sound like pistol-shots, and then came a great crack—the bark parted all round, and slowly the huge tree toppled over,

bringing down another that was lashed to it with rattan creepers, and leaving a great gap in the forest roof, through which the sun shone brightly, the giant trunk falling with a rush and thud to earth, that made the ground vibrate. The stump on which I had been standing a few seconds before was cleft into three huge splinters by one of the branches; and all round, for a space of twenty yards, lay a mass of broken timber and leaves, affording us considerable occupation when it became necessary to continue the "pegging."

Besides trifling adventures of this sort, on Sundays we got an occasional chance of visiting our neighbours, as we called them, though the nearest was a long way off. On one occasion, Sunday being bright and fine, all the coolies away at a weekly bazaar at the head of the ghaut, and D—— and Charlie having gone to spend the day with C. H——, of Polyampara, I and L—— made up our minds—by no means an easy thing after a hard week's work—to call upon F—— and his wife in their bungalow, the only house in the district I had not yet visited. So, after bestowing more care upon our "get up" than we had done for a

long time, we shouldered our rifles and marched down the well-known "Sircar" road as far as W——'s estate. Then, following the guidance of L——, we crossed a belt of jungle, where he once shot a hog-deer at fifty yards with a charge of No. 6 shot, and saw F—— shortly afterwards kill a python, eighteen feet long, lying curled up on a branch overhead. Next, we passed through an abandoned nursery of coffee plants, some for which there had fallen no use, and, being planted very close together, they had run up to a height of twelve or fifteen feet, forming long straight stems.

Beyond this our climb commenced, and as we threaded our way through the trees, the path rose rapidly by zigzags, at times so steep that we mounted up natural steps of rocks until we had little strength left in us, and I was just making up my mind to call a halt, when L—— shouted to me to come on—"one struggle more and we are free." So, with a final effort we scrambled up a bush-grown bank, and, emerging from the shade of the trees on the top, perceived we were at our destination. It would be difficult to describe my delight, after two months and more of "roughing it," to find

myself suddenly in a beautiful English-looking garden, full of roses and geraniums, and verdant with green lawns of short grass, the like of which I had not seen since leaving England. And then, too, there was an English lady—a rare species in the jungle—standing under the verandah, with some small children playing about, who looked astonishingly white and rosy to me after seeing so much of the chocolate-coloured coolie babies. We were cordially welcomed, and being joined soon after by F—— and S—— from the opposite side of the valley, we sat down to a real English meal, at a table with a cloth and silver teapots and sugar basins, all of which deeply impressed us, while we ate all sorts of forgotten luxuries brought up from Madras and Bombay by our kind hostess.

The day was only too short. When we had looked over all the new English books and read the magazines, we went out and walked round the "terrace." The bungalow occupies an unusually commanding position, being perched upon the very summit of a rock which rises out of the forest like a volcanic island from the sea. The forest trees come nearly to

the verandah on the western side, but on every other face the ground slopes down, and is covered with a dense growth of lemon-grass, which waves in the wind like an autumn corn-field in old England. To lessen the danger to the bungalow of being surrounded and engulfed in one of the hill fires which consume the long grass every year, F—— has made a garden all round the house, and then cut a broad smooth road in a complete ring about his castle; so that, were the fire to come up the hill, he would make his first stand against it there, and believes he could keep it at bay until burnt out. The consequent necessity of keeping this wide terrace perfectly free from weeds and vegetation makes it delightful to walk upon, and we spent half the time circumnavigating the bungalow and admiring the view—truly a magnificent one. When we stood in front of the house we looked down on our coffee valley, with the scattered plantations like patches on a green cloak, seeing W——'s white bungalow, with its two palms in the courtyard, and the little Swiss château of S——, where we had spent the previous Sunday, and far away to the southward Ootcha Mulla and the clearings

of our own estate. Then, wandering round to the other side of the hill, we looked down another slope of the ridge, upon a wide uninhabited valley stretching away as far as the eye could see to the east and southward—a wonderful stretch of unopened forest land, where the white man has rarely been—the home of the bison and elephant, who have things all their own way down there. But the greenness of the forest was broken by widespreading patches of yellow and brown vegetation, which, though too far away for us to distinguish accurately of what they were composed, were formed, no doubt, by great expanses of bamboos, which, according to the custom of that curious plant, had seeded during the last twelve months for the first time in sixty years, and then died out. The old generation far and wide was withered and dead, and underneath them the ground was green with the shoots of young plants. Some of the stems in this valley, I heard, are of enormous size, sixty or seventy feet high, and a foot thick. I should have much liked to have investigated them personally, but it was not possible that day; so, after lingering on the pleasant hill-tops as long as we could, and

taking tea with our hostess, we were reluctantly obliged to make a start back for our own encampment just as dusk was coming on. We had not allowed sufficient daylight, however, for the return march, and by the time we had left the last estate behind us, and had entered the Ootcha Mulla jungle, darkness came down suddenly and enveloped everything, so that we had one of the roughest walks I can ever remember. The track, which in daylight is a mere beaten footpath, with dense forest on either side, and encumbered by fallen trees and short stumps sticking up at every step, in the gloom was terribly difficult to find. Fortunately both of us were clad in white from head to foot, and by keeping together we could just make out our respective forms. First, L—— came a "cropper" over a stump, and bruised himself considerably. Then my turn arrived, and, without any apparent reason, I found myself rolling over among the dead leaves and weeds, but was soon up again and proceeding cautiously forward. It was very ridiculous, and my companion laughed uproariously every time I came in collision with a log or stump; while, if there were any tigers in the neighbourhood, they

must have thought us the most light-hearted of benighted travellers. At one point the track bends sharp to the left, and not knowing where we were, L——, who held my hand, walked straight forward, with the natural result that we very speedily came into contact with a big stem, which made my companion indignantly ask what on earth the tree was doing in the middle of the path. But I suggested that probably it was we who were trespassing, and after carefully feeling about with our feet and hands, we again found the bare-beaten ground of the path, and continued on our way. After innumerable tumbles, at last we saw the twinkling lights of the natives' watch-fires gleaming through the trees below us, and soon after were seated comfortably at supper in our tiny hut, which, however, seemed a palace of light after the dense darkness of the jungle. Before we turned in, we declared that it had been a jolly day, and that F——'s bungalow was worth a longer and even rougher walk.

Another occupation of the coffee planter on a new estate is "pitting," of which there are several methods. Our own was to pit each clearing before the forest is felled, and for this

purpose I used to start out each morning at daybreak, with perhaps two hundred men following in Indian file at my heels, and proceed to the jungles, which had been already pegged and marked out. Each coolie brought with him a mammôty, an axe for cutting roots, and a long iron bar pointed at one end and flattened out into a spud at the other, which is chiefly used for removing heavy stones and loosening the soil. We then went to work in a long straight line if possible, but to get the hands into any sort of order in heavy jungle is much more easy to talk of than to effect, as it is not possible to see more than ten men at a time, and each man wants to work where the ground is softest and there are fewest roots. The daily task of each is supposed to be twenty-five pits of regulation size, and the superintendent has to see this properly done. Perhaps he places a mark where each man begins, at the last pit of yesterday's work, and then goes to the other end of the line, half a mile away. When he returns, he is surprised and pleased to find the first men have already finished half their tasks, but on investigating he sees the "mild Hindoos" have moved his pegs back so as to in-

clude ten or twelve of yesterday's pits, and then he grows wrathful, and perhaps, if his temper be hasty, "pitches into" the worst offenders. At another place a poor famine-stricken wretch, who has hardly strength to lift his mammôty, has scraped a few wretched holes scarcely big enough to plant a seed in, and much too small for a coffee bush, and the exertion having proved too great, he is lying shivering on the ground in the cold stage of fever. What is the Englishman to do? If he maintains strict discipline and insists on the full task, the coolie cannot do it; or attempts it and dies, and is buried in a hole in the jungle. I am sure most planters would follow the more humane course, and deal gently with the sick and feeble, if they were working on their own land; but it is difficult to know what is best to do when working with the money of much-respected "shareholders," and with a vigilant agent on the look out to see where every anna goes, and obliged by his official position to put humanity on one side and look at everything from a business point of view. Besides the coolies who scamp their allotted tasks from sickness, there are many others who give a vast amount

of trouble by their stupidity in making pits out of the straight line, or just too small to pass muster—the regulation size being two feet deep by eighteen inches square, measured across from the level of the surface of the ground. The holes should have right-angled corners, as experienced planters believe that if a tree be set in a circular hole, the roots follow the limits of the soil which has been disturbed, and become as much "pot-bound" as though they grew in stone jars; but when the pit is square the roots grow into the angles, and, finding themselves faced by walls of earth, are obliged to penetrate them and spread into the surrounding soil.

This sort of work took up my whole attention during the week before Christmas, and it was impossible to call it enjoyable; in fact, it was dreadfully monotonous. By the time the pits began to be numbered by thousands, the gound also presented a curious aspect—something as if the jungle had been overrun by monstrous land-crabs, which had dug out their underground houses in every direction; but the walking was better than usual, owing to the pits being in straight lines and the timber still

standing, instead of cumbering the ground, as it did in the planted clearings. I also found these holes were very productive traps for all sorts of strange creatures—beetles and lizards especially—though once or twice I have seen small snakes imprisoned in them. Early in the morning nearly every excavation is tenanted, often by insects and animals having natural antipathies to each other, and the results are fierce battles, in which all the combatants fight bravely, as they seem to know there is no escape for the vanquished. The lizards especially, whose wandering propensities often lead them down the crumbling sides of these pitfalls, contend like bull-dogs, and I have watched several well-sustained combats, in which the pugnacious creatures bit and kicked and shook each other with the greatest fury; but when either of the combatants was getting much the worst of it, I generally exercised my authority by suddenly seizing him by the tail and drawing him out of his arena, putting him, to cool down and recover his senses, on the neighbouring moss.

Anything which breaks the current of such monotonous work as "pitting" is welcome, so

it may be guessed with what satisfaction I received a pleasant note from Mrs. F——, to say that a picnic had been organized for Christmas Day at a waterfall close to S——'s bungalow, and everybody was wanted who could possibly come. There was some difficulty as to who should stay in charge of the estate, and take evening roll-call on the 25th, but my associate magnanimously offered to sacrifice himself, provided I would do duty on New Year's Day. This I thought very generous, and agreed to; but subsequently I found out D—— had scent of another picnic, which was to come off at Palghaut on January 1, and which was to be graced, so rumour said, by the presence of two young ladies newly from England—a fact which he kept to himself, and doubtless it consoled him for a lonely Christmas. The "stoker," as my companion was commonly called in the district, from his once having been a nautical engineer, was a hard-working and well-meaning Cornishman, but he kept a remarkably sharp look-out for the interests of what is vulgarly called "number one," and considered every one else Egyptians whom it was quite lawful to despoil.

Christmas Eve was celebrated by us four "associated hermits," L——, "Charlie," "the stoker," and myself, as well as our circumstances would permit. We illuminated our hut with candles stuck in beer-bottles round the walls; we got a big leafy shrub and tied it up by the roots to the lamp overhead, so that it hung down and looked just a little like holly; and then we spread a clean sheet on the table, and mustered all our available crockery. Everybody had been busy cooking, and, having just received a box of stores from Madras, the courses were so numerous that it was hardly possible to partake of them all. Everybody praised the particular dish he had concocted, and each was allowed by mutual consent to eat his own productions, the only thing obtaining public favour being a big jam tart of my own manufacture, which speedily vanished before our united attack. Then we took to brewing punch in a washing-basin, and drinking the health of all "at home," and every other toast we could think of, until the "stoker," carried away in the enthusiasm of the moment, proposed we should go out and have some snow-balling. But, alas! there was

no snow outside—only a hot, still night, with the frogs croaking down in the jungle, and the sambour deer barking across the valley, and the fireflies floating heavily about; so we sang one song more, and drained the last of the punch to "our noble selves," and turned in to dream of other Christmases.

The following morning, having started the coolies to work, I put on my full "war-paint," *i.e.* new white clothes, top-boots, and a sun helmet; and, mounting the estate pony, set off for W——'s.

By the time I got there, there were several ponies in the courtyard, being led about by their syces; and giving mine to the ghora-wallah, who had been running behind me with my rifle, I joined the party in the verandah, which consisted of all the English settlers of the district (with the exception of D——), some eight gentlemen and one lady, and we soon made a move forward; the provisions, borne in baskets on the heads of coolies, leading the way, and we following more leisurely. Mrs. F—— was carried in a chair lashed to two strong bamboos and supported by four picked coolies, who seemed very proud of their duty;

indeed, their headman, an old Canarese maistry with clean shaven head and snowy waistcloth, nearly went frantic in his endeavours to make himself useful to the "mem sahib." He carried a small axe in his hand and ran on ahead, and whenever he saw a creeper or rattan cane likely to get in the way, hurled himself upon it and cut it into small pieces, and then salaamed and scudded on again. In this way we proceeded towards Nillacothy Rock, following the winding path down W——'s "trace," which, by the way, he had had cleared of leaves and sticks for the first time in five years, in order to make the journey smoother for the English lady. We crossed the Manalora by a fallen fig tree—an undertaking which Mrs. F—— faced with great courage, though she could scarcely have felt comfortable in her swinging-chair so high above the water—and then, passing through the Nillacothy estate, took our way to a beautiful spot, where a mountain torrent came foaming down from the hills, and, after forming a deep still basin, went on down a shady avenue of forest trees, towards the valley. Here we found the cloth already spread, and several scarlet-turbaned servants busy boiling water in

a kettle and making the food ready. It is curious how picnickers invariably seek the neighbourhood of water for the *al-fresco* meal. Of course, the demands of the kettle are all-important; but that cannot be the whole reason, as they are just as pleased to sit by the side of the sea and fetch drinkable water from a distance. More probably it is because the neighbourhood of water is generally picturesque and pleasing to the eye, especially in hot weather.

We had a really beautiful spot for this wild banquet of ours—a little tinkling waterfall above us, the still deep pool at our side, and overhead tall, graceful, green tree-ferns, shading us from the sun and completely roofing in our dining room. Lower down its quiet vista, the stream flowed amongst rocks and little sandy beaches, where a couple of grey-and-white stints were busy searching for insects among the stones, and paid no more attention to us than if we had been a company of the elephants on whose haunts we were trespassing. But besides the little harmless birds and elephants, this was a noted spot for tigers; and as the sudden appearance of one of those striped brutes, as an unbidden guest, would have been

worse than the proverbial wasp which puts in an unwelcome visit at English picnics, Mrs. F—— begged me to fire my rifle to frighten anything that might be in the neighbourhood, and the woods and rocks accordingly rang at the report with a hundred echoes. Then we sat down to a pleasant meal, booted and spurred as we were, and the stores of good things which inhedged our amiable hostess crumbled down and disappeared before our attacks; the last of all to vanish being a mountainous sponge-cake, with sugar ramparts and turrets, the work of that lady's own kind hands, which we ate like schoolboys. But the happiest hour must come to an end, and when the gentlemen had smoked their cheroots and finished their last story, a move homeward was proposed just as it was growing dusk, and we walked slowly down the narrow path, followed by the servants, who had industriously finished off everything eatable and drinkable while we chatted, and so brought back with them nothing but china and empty bottles.

Darkness descended before we reached W——'s, and poor Mrs. F—— had a rough walk through the jungle and over the fallen

trees, as her chair was useless, since the bearers could no longer keep together. Of course, we did what we could, but I fear we rather embarrassed her by the persistency with which we each tried to be useful. One helping hand is all very well in scrambling over a log, but seven or eight are too many.

The festivities, however, were not yet over, for W—— had prepared a big dinner for us, with a real turkey and a veritable tinned plum-pudding, of which we partook, and then sat up till late, drinking punch and champagne-cup in the verandah; so late, in fact, that it was "to-morrow" before we could think of separating. And then those amongst us who were furthest from their own places accepted W——'s and his assistant C. H——'s hospitality, and shook themselves down as best they might in hammocks and on sofas.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARD AT WORK.

For the next few days I was entirely alone on the clearing, D—— being away picnicking at Palghaut, and L—— and "Charlie" visiting on other estates. It happened that at this time our pay-sheet contained the names of more men than had probably ever before been in these jungles since they first sprouted up, and certainly of the largest number under one leader. My own personal coolies, living in the huts round me and within fifty yards, numbered a little over three hundred men, women, and children, and besides these there were two hundred "contract coolies" encamped in the middle of No. 1 clearing, making in all over five hundred natives under my orders. Such a condition of things is not usual on an estate of the size of ours, but we had been very de-

sirous to force things on at a rapid pace, in order to get a large acreage planted during the season to please the shareholders at home, and this accounts for the small army mentioned.

The "contract coolies" were not so much trouble to me as the others. They came up from Madura under their own maistries, and had been lodged in two parallel rows of huts among the coffee in the north-west clearing. Their chief headman was named Yaneta, a venerable, grey-bearded old patriarch, and every morning he stalked out with his flowing white garments and a long staff in his hand, to lead his men to the work, which he had contracted to finish by a certain date. The only concern which I had with this division was to visit them two or three times a day, and see that the operations—chiefly "pitting"—were conducted well and up to regulation standard. They also visited me in considerable numbers to be doctored every evening, and seemed to have considerable faith in my prescriptions, though I must confess these were more distinguished for simplicity than depth of knowledge.

But the coolies living around me, who belonged

to the estate, were a lot of trouble. First of all, they lived fearfully crowded—some three hundred human beings squeezed into five "lines" of low huts all close together, and only a few yards above the stream from which we got our drinking water. Inside, I am bound to say, the natives keep their huts very clean, and the constant pattering about of bare feet smooths and hardens the mud floors until they shine like marble; but, unfortunately, their tidiness ceases at their doorsteps, and beyond this their habits are horrible and their knowledge of the rudiments of sanitation very slight. In fact, the "settlement" was in the most atrocious state of neglect. There had been no attempt at drainage or any necessary arrangements, and, having been inhabited by large numbers of the lowest orders of India for two years, its condition may be better imagined than described. I several times proposed to turn our attention for a time to building better "lines" in a more elevated and healthy spot, but the reply was always to hurry forward the planting operations, and when those were completed to look after the coolies,—undoubtedly the right plan to follow when the first object is to get

a dividend as big and as soon as possible. So there we were still, and as the weather grew hotter, the danger of an epidemic became greater. Already there were five or six deaths every week, and the jungle round about was becoming thickly marked with the little hillocks which denoted the last resting-place of some poor wretch.

The coolies seemed to be very callous to suffering, and even to the death of their nearest relations. It may not be so in reality, but their conduct seemed such to an outsider like myself. For instance, one very hot day I appointed myself sanitary inspector, and went through the "lines" to see if anything might be done to render them more healthy. The coolies were at work, but from one hut rose a thin wisp of light blue smoke, not from a chimney, needless to say, but percolating through the thatch. Approaching to see who was inside, supposing it might be some sick person too ill to work, I went up to the low door, and, stooping down, looked in. There was a fearful odour about the place, and, accustomed as I had grown to strong smells, it was as much as I could do to keep my place. In the centre of the floor

was a low stone fireplace, and a woman sat boiling rice in an earthen chatty over the embers. In the far corner lay something wrapped up in a coarse cumbley or shawl, and pushed as much out of the way as possible. Guessing this was the cause of the fearful odour, I asked, "What on earth have you got there?" "Oh," said the woman, as she squatted on her heels and leisurely stirred and tasted the conjee she was boiling, "that's my husband; he died five days ago." When I asked why she had not had him buried, instead of keeping him in such a shocking condition, she merely said she had been waiting for me to send men to do it. Half an hour afterwards, two men with mammôties were scraping a shallow hole in the jungle, under a sacred fig tree, and having made it about three feet deep, they rested from their work, when, after admiring the grave for a little time and rolling themselves a chew of betel-nut, they fetched the dead man and laid him in it. The earth was replaced and trodden down, and there was an end of him; and when I read over his name at roll-call that evening and he did not answer, my pencil was drawn through it. So he

had disappeared entirely—hopes, feelings, and ambitions (if he ever had any); Heaven only knows where all went to! Not even to his consort does his memory seem to have remained long green, for the same evening one of the men who had buried him seems to have hinted to her that there was room in his hut still vacant, and she moved across the next morning to his dwelling with all her worldly belongings—a palm-leaf mat to sleep upon, two clay chatties, some oil for her hair in an empty soda-water bottle, and two handsful of rice in an old piece of sackcloth. May her second matrimonial venture be more fortunate than her first!

And yet these coolies were undoubtedly honest, and very courteous and reverential towards their superiors. When I spoke to a maistry, very likely a venerable old grey-beard three times as old as I was, he listened in silence, and when I had done salaamed profoundly by placing both hands over his face and bowing down almost to the ground. At first this was rather overwhelming, but one soon gets accustomed to it, and it is undoubtedly agreeable to be bowed to. As Sancho Panza says, "It is good to know one's self master

even though of a flock of sheep." Then as to their honesty; my hut was always open—in fact, there was no fastening to the door at all, but a "bobbin;" and as my things must have seemed an immense wealth to so poor a people, they showed great forbearance in leaving them alone. Several times I returned from work and found my breakfast spread on the table, and three or four hungry and thin coolies crouched in my verandah — messengers from the other estates, or maistries—eyeing my provender and discussing the absent sahib's household arrangements, though no one ventured across the threshold. Perhaps my servant purloined a little that did not belong to him, but doubtless he looked upon all that as perquisites, and this habit is not entirely unknown in England.

As to heavier crimes and any violence towards myself or each other, it never seemed to enter the native head, as far as my limited experience went. Alone in the jungles, and surrounded by all these men, with a great number of rupees in the iron safe at my elbow, the keys of which hung at my belt, the wide woods around where any number of fugitives

from justice might find safe and certain refuge, yet I slept every night as calmly and undisturbed as I might have done in the best guarded English town. Policemen or laws were practically unknown. Of course they existed, and I was still under the broad shield of English protection, but nothing was seen or heard of Government authority. Never since my arrival had I viewed an official of any kind, or paid "tribute" to any sircar.

It is undoubtedly pleasant to be "monarch of all you survey" for a time, but the novelty wears off by degrees, and then there comes a longing to speak one's own language and see white faces again, and one's thoughts wander away to the old home country, while the gorgeousness of the tropics grows dull and tedious, till one becomes regularly homesick—a state of mind which is bad enough at the time, but in turn passes off slowly.

On New Year's Eve, 1877, I was, I believe, the only Englishman in the district, every one else being away in the lowlands. Some day, when the Annamullies are a thriving corner of the Madras Presidency, with numerous English stations, good roads, and maybe a railway, it

will hardly be believed that on the eve of that year of grace the sole representative of the dominant race was one "griffin," alone by himself in a "tooth-pick and brown paper" hut; and yet so it happened.

My attempts to commemorate the advent of the New Year were confined to making myself an extra good dinner—the usual way in which an Anglo-Saxon celebrates an anniversary of any sort. He does not discriminate, but banquets equally at the death of the old year or to hail the new one. In the evening he drinks to the departed, and in the morning the same bowl is full again to hail the new-comer. In Italy they would wave flags, or masquerade and march up and down the streets in gay throngs; the Frenchman would put on his best plumage and patronize the boulevards, supremely happy in staring and being stared at, and the American goes in for torchlight processions and visiting, but the Briton cannot get beyond dining. The red-letter days in his calendar ought to be marked with a saucepan and gridiron, *saltire*-wise.

As may be supposed, I was scarcely sorry when my reign of undivided power came to

an end on the return of the revellers from the lowlands. For to look after five hundred men and women in thick forest; to muster them, doctor them, and superintend everything; to be engineer, carpenter, cook, surveyor, horticulturist, doctor, accountant, and chief inspector of drainage in turn every twenty-four hours, takes up most of one's time.

Besides, we had at last finished "pitting" one clearing, and I was beginning to wonder what operations would come next, when D—— arrived, and, taking advantage of his superior experience, I consulted him. He at once said, that the next thing to be done, after having carefully dug these twenty-two thousand pits, was to fill them up again! At first, I naturally thought he must be joking, but the truth is the forest under which we had been so industriously scratching these holes for the last three weeks had now to be felled and burnt, and the sufficient reason for refilling the pits was that the valuable top soil, which contains the best nourishment, might be saved from the flames, which would bake it to a sort of brick—a result which should be avoided, if possible, yet which would assuredly happen if the "pitting" were

delayed until after burning. So we set to work again, and with the same industry which we displayed before, filled up the holes far and wide, my chief care being to see that the top soil really went to the bottom of the pit, as the coolies are apt to scrape the soil in just as it lies. After the burn, we should be able to tell the position of each pit by the soil being a little higher over it than elsewhere.

Our larder had been replenished in a most satisfactory way by the generosity of G. D——, of Polyampara. One night it happened that he was seated in the verandah of S——'s bungalow, meditating over an after-dinner cigar, when a sambour deer came out of the gloom of the woods by the stream, and, after sniffing the air, began to graze in the bright moonlight. D——, who is fond of venison and a good shot, stole into the house, and getting his rifle, reached a crag above the spot, unobserved; then, firing at his leisure at a hundred and fifty yards, the ball struck the sambour full between the horns, and it rolled over dead—a very creditable performance, as moonlight shooting is much more difficult than in the daytime. The result of this shot was that for the next four or five days

the whole district lived on venison, the animal being as large as a cow. I have tasted the best haunches of Scottish stags, the wild mouflon of Corsica, the thick-coated reindeer of Norway, and now the sambour of the Indian jungles, and my choice is for the latter; but I say so with diffidence, as three months of the strong-fleshed Indian sheep had doubtless made me very ready to admire anything a wee bit more tender.

It is astonishing how little one sees of big game in these jungles, although their fresh foot-marks everywhere show they are numerous and come forth to feed in the open every evening. I fear a place like "the settlement," low down and surrounded by dense forest, was the worst situation that could be for a sportsman, as no view is obtained, and S—— on his wood-fringed grass plateau, or F—— on his hill-top, were in much better positions. Myself and L—— made a valiant attempt to climb the green Pardagherry —the "hill of wonder"—one day in search of game with our rifles; but the jungle was absolutely impenetrable without billmen, and after reducing our clothes to a fearful con-

dition, which cost us some hours of hard sewing to put right, we finally came to a standstill about half a mile from where the grass begins on top, and had to beat an ignominious retreat.

CHAPTER IX.

BIRDS, BEASTS, AND SAVAGES.

When the weather grew warmer in February, animal life became more varied in our jungles. Among the insects, curiously enough, the most common was a small brown dragon-fly exactly resembling the English species. This was abundant everywhere in the openings of the forest and by every stream, but neither striking in colour, nor peculiar to the country. Another English object was the bracken fern. On every estate more than two years old it grew in the greatest profusion. Poothpara, ten years old, was in parts hidden by it, and as I often wandered through the dense ferns knee-deep, it was easy to imagine myself at home again on an English hillside. The oddest thing is, it never grows in the jungle or on the grass hills. There was not a root of it on our estate,

or on the next youngest, Nillacothy; but on the others it was the most vigorous of weeds, and seemed to have risen by spontaneous generation, as it is almost impossible it should have been imported, and equally difficult to think the seeds or roots had lain dormant since the jungle first grew up.

Again, the commonest of birds is a small species exactly resembling in habits and plumage the yellow wagtail so well known at home. I never passed along the stony bed of a nullah without disturbing two or three of these lively little birds, and they twittered as they flew, and jerked their slender tails in their search for insects and small beetles, after the fashion so familiar to any one who has given attention to country sights and sounds at home.

Amongst the butterflies, *Papilio polymnestor*, which was common during the damp weather at the close of the wet monsoon, almost disappeared when the dry weather came, and the very handsome black-and-gold *Papilio pompeius* took its place—an insect with wings five or six inches from tip to tip, which looks more like a good-sized bird when flying than a simple butterfly. There is another beautiful

species, known scientifically as *Hestia lynceus*, of even wider expanse of wing, and yielding in grace of flight and habits to none. I had left some specimens behind me amongst my collections in England, but what a poor idea they give of the insect in its native home! Truly from them it is possible to admire their thin, semi-transparent, pearly white wings, marked out with numerous black velvet-like blotches, but "at home" the creature looked doubly beautiful. They are essentially water-loving, and the new road by the side of the Manalora was the best place to watch them. Here the trees grow up in steep banks on either side, with the stream beneath and the blue sky overhead, and the *lynceus* revelled amongst the foliage on which their larvæ fed. Their favourite habit is to lazily flap their wide wings while ascending to the tops of the trees, and then, keeping their wings spread out to the full on either side, they let themselves come slowly sailing down in wide circles, like large white blossoms, until just at the surface of the water, when they flutter over their own bright reflection for a moment, and again rise up to the tree-tops—a happy, lazy sort of way of spend-

ing existence, which I was generally reluctant to disturb, not being one of those naturalists so enthusiastic that they deem no creature has reached the goal of its existence until it has found a place in their cabinets.

Of timber in our forests there were several curious varieties, perhaps the most common and striking being a fine tree which has a long smooth stem, with leaves and branches so high up in the air that I was quite unable to distinguish the form of the first, and consequently to identify the species. The stem is useless as wood, but at the bottom is strangely shaped. It is surrounded by a varying number of great solid buttresses of living wood—perhaps four feet high, five or six feet broad along the surface of the ground, and yet only one or two inches thick. Perhaps the best idea of this curious tree will be gained when I say that I have seen many, round the boll of which six horses could have been "stalled" comfortably, and the horses would have been quite invisible to each other and to any one unless standing just at the entrance to these curious natural recesses.

It may be wondered how we obtained pro-

visions and the necessaries of life, but the mode was very simple. Our ordinary everyday needs were supplied from Wallenghay, at the foot of the ghaut, and Palghaut on the railway. At each of these places we had a native agent, who received ten or twelve rupees a month by way of payment, and sent up by estate-tapal or special coolie everything we ordered. Eggs were four for the value of an English penny—cheap, but very small; butter was also cheap, but, being made of buffalo milk, was white and rather tasteless. It came in little pats, wrapped up in banana leaves, in the tapal-basket from Wallenghay. Bread in small square loaves, mutton at twopence a pound, and vegetables, came from Palghaut. Sometimes, when there was a considerable demand, the butchers sent up an unfortunate brown sheep, which was slaughtered at one of the bungalows, and the meat distributed to "subscribers." No beef or pork could be had nearer than Ootocamund or Bangalore; and if we wanted any luxuries, such as cheese, sugar, tea, coffee, etc., we wrote down to the English stores, the price lists of which we took care to have by us, at Madras or Calicut; and they were sent by train and

coolie, which naturally made the cost heavy. It was possible to get wines and spirits from the native shopkeepers in the lowlands, but we sadly mistrusted them, and bought our beer, wine, and brandy from the coast. The bottled ale cost, by the time it reached my bungalow, about one and fourpence a bottle of the smallest size, and yet every one in the district drank it very freely. It is said that if the English left India to-morrow, all that would remain to mark their raj would be railways and mountains of empty bottles; and, though exaggerated, there is a good deal of truth in this. Even on our hills in every court-yard the beer-bottles stood in great heaps, and nobody utilized them except the wasps, which made nests in their necks. On the whole, the household expenses of the chik-doree are not heavy. If he spends more than usual for superfluities, he gets the necessities of life very cheaply. He pays no house rent, as his bungalow almost always belongs to the estate. There are no taxes or licences; he dresses as he likes; and, as there are no shops, he cannot fritter away his income. There lay a solitary rupee at the bottom of my pocket for a month; it was of no good to me, and I had forgotten its

existence, and if it had not been for paying the coolies on Saturday evenings, I should have forgotten the very look of money, as all our transactions with the agents were settled every month by cheque. Living quite comfortably, with one servant, wines, beer, food, and everything else cost me between Rs. 100 and Rs. 125 per month; but one or two other assistants, who were more abstemious, did not smoke, and so on, kept their expenses within Rs. 100, which is less than £10 per month.

As the hot weather advanced and we began "to hate the sun," the grass hills dried and withered. Pardagherry especially changed its emerald livery for one of dusky brown, and we expected every day the jungle men would set fire to the grass, and then we should see a mountain in flames.

Some mention should be made of these Cardars, or wild jungle men. They seem to be allied to the Gonds of Central India and the Veddahs of Ceylon, but from what little I know of the three races, I think they are all slightly different in form and habits. These tribes are the wildest of the wild, and it is almost as hard to learn anything about their ways as to catch

a leopard asleep. My first meeting with one of them happened when walking slowly down the new road; and my footsteps making no sound on the fresh earth, on turning a corner I suddenly came in sight of a small brown man fishing in the river below. He was sitting on his heels on a rock in the centre of the stream, with his back towards me, deeply intent upon watching a shoal of small fish playing about the line which hung from the long slender bamboo in his hand. He seemed to be of most diminutive size, not more than four feet six inches in height, and of the darkest brown colour, though well made and comfortably sleek of flesh; but the thing which gave him the most comical appearance was that his entire raiment consisted of a regular Scotch cap, which, there could be no doubt, had once hung in the shop window of a booth in "Auld Reekie." How he came by it is difficult to say. It may have been dropped in the jungle, or found its way to him through some native bazaar, but there it was on the curly head of this otherwise entirely unclad savage. For a minute or so I admired him unobserved; but when I moved he caught the sound of my foot-

fall, and, hastily springing up, gave one look at me; and, though I called out to him in Tamil and Hindustani to stop, he sprang lightly from rock to rock, and disappeared in the jungle on the far side. On another occasion, walking down this same road and turning a corner abruptly, I met three jungle-men face to face. They were very much frightened; but, as there was a steep bank on one side and a drop on the other, they had to walk by me. The tallest of them was not five feet high, so I towered over him by twelve inches. They were all as black as charcoal, with woolly heads and thick noses of a negroid type. They bore no weapons with them, but were carrying some sort of fruit, wrapped up in banana leaves, on their heads.

In the jungles we sometimes came upon traces of them, such as holes where they had been digging up the ginger roots, or their little sheep-like tracks over the dead leaves and in and out of the tree stems—the only highways of this small and shy people. In one spot, under a wild fig tree, in the hot weather, I found the remains of one of their villages, consisting of three huts made by slanting small sticks together and thatching them with boughs and

grass; but the poor little structures had been almost destroyed by wind and rain, and no other traces of the builders existed except a few fire-blackened stones. But the relics of their work which impressed me most, were the wonderful ladders they make to reach the nests of the wild bees. Let us suppose a jungle man, wandering about, finds a nest with a swarm in it high up, perhaps a hundred feet above the ground, on the branch of a tall forest tree. He forthwith sets to work, and out of the stem of full-grown bamboos cuts himself several hundred pegs, wedge-shaped at one end and slightly notched at the other, taking care that the nodes of the bamboo shall be at the notched end of the peg, so that they shall be less liable to split when hammered. Then he waits until nightfall, when he proceeds, with some clansmen, to the tree and commences his dangerous climb. Numerous young saplings, of the thickness of a man's thumb, are cut down and trimmed from twigs, and some rattan canes split into thin fibres, and then the party set to work. With a rude wooden mallet the first bamboo peg is driven into the tree-trunk, about two feet from the ground, and the butt of the first sapling is

lashed to it with fibres. Then the "jungle-wallah" mounts on to this peg, which does not stick out from the tree more than four inches, and drives another in at about the height of his chest, and again fastens the slender sapling to it. Then, holding pegs, mallet, and fibres in his mouth or slung on his back, he again steps upwards in some marvellous manner, and another peg is driven, until the end of the first sapling is reached, when another is passed to him from below, and the wonderful ladder carried on. It must be remembered all this is done at the dead of night, for not even a Cardar could look down from so great a height and so slender a perch without becoming giddy; and darkness is essential to prevent him seeing below. But it must also hinder his view of his work, and to my idea there could scarcely be a more uncomfortable position than standing on a clothes'-peg, with one's nose to the smooth trunk of a tree, a hundred feet or more above the ground on a dark and perhaps windy night, and, worst of all, nothing to hold to! But these little men do not seem to mind it much, and they generally reach the first branch in safety. After that it is comparatively plain sailing, though

very often the ladders have to be continued again and again. When the nest is reached, the bees are driven out by smoke, and a rich reward then awaits the adventurer, who slings the honeycomb on his back and perhaps eats a little by way of refreshment, of which he must stand much in need, retracing his steps slowly downwards, feeling for each peg and holding on to the slight sticks lashed to them. Let us hope the bees permit him to descend in peace, and that he regains his friends and *terra firma* with ample spoil and no bones broken. Truly a fair booty makes a brave thief!

For some time there was little to speak of in the way of novelty on the estate. Certain building operations were carried on, such as that of the pucka wooden house of the superintendent on the top of the Bungalow Hill—every estate, by the way, has a Bungalow Hill—and some new coolie "lines" put up in one clearing conveniently near the road and a stream. My friend L—— was also making himself a hut on some land he was opening to the south of us, which, from its extreme unhealthiness, we called the "Bitter End."

The other work went on much as usual,

and by the time we got home each evening we cared to do little but sit still and smoke. Occasionally, however, we had some shooting, for which it was not necessary to go further than the verandah; for above our hut grew a far-spreading fig tree, the fruit of which seemed to be ripe about March. Then, every evening, flocks of a beautiful little pigeon, with claret-coloured back and wings and yellow-green body, repaired to roost and sup amongst the figs. So we brought out our guns, and made as much noise as if we were at a warm corner of a covert on the 1st of October; but the tree was very high, and the birds very small, so we did little damage. It was wonderful how difficult it became to see the pigeons when once they had perched. Their under parts, being pale yellow, matched almost exactly with the slender fig-leaves; and sometimes, although there were a hundred of them in the tree, none of us could make out a single bird, until they began to move and feed, and send the figs rattling to the ground.

When darkness settled down, and we lay silent in our armchairs, with our cheroots gleaming and the guns idle at our sides, the

flying foxes (squirrels they really are) sallied forth, and skimmed, with widespread limbs, from tree to tree. We watched for them, and when one crossed a patch of sky above, some one fired, and the silent forest re-echoed with the sound. But that was generally the only result, for the light in the evening was so misleading, I believe we often fired at the shadows of the animals. Yet, though dark at first, when the moon came out, and the silver light streamed down through the tree-tops and illuminated some things and threw others into deep shadow, the effect was most soft and beautiful. But, alas! we could not safely enjoy it, for with the moon rose the fever mist, a death-cloud; it could be seen, a thin white web of transparent light, down among the rocks that line the bed of the nullah; and we knew that behind that glistening veil hid the face of a fell demon, the fever and ague. So we retired to the poor protection of our hut, and lit the lamp and drew a red curtain over the doorway, in order, as well as might be, to shut out foreboding thought and make the best of the present.

It does not necessarily follow that, because one is in India, one can always obtain plenty

of good shooting. The truth is, to shoot big game requires care, time, and expense, and the average planter gets very little sport until his estate is all opened and the hard work is over. Then, in the intervals that come before or after each crop, he sometimes finds a little leisure.

For my part, although I had almost given up hopes of any really good shooting for a time, yet, one day when work was slack, I arranged with L—— to start at daybreak the next morning, and explore the far side of the ridge at the end of which lies the Varlavachen hill and bungalow. So at dawn he was in my hut and asking what we were going to look for. I proposed elephants, and it was agreed, although only my express rifle was serviceable, as there was no ammunition for the other guns. However, L——, who was a desperate smoker, took a tin of "bird's-eye" in one pocket, some sandwiches in the other, his beloved meerschaum in his mouth, and a revolver and hunting-knife in his belt, and declared he was ready to go anywhere. I was equally ready, and we started just as the sun was rising. But the sun gets up very quickly in India,

and by the time we had threaded our way through the rocky clearing, now green with the guinea grass we planted two months ago, it was beginning to be very hot, and we were glad of the friendly shelter of a belt of jungle, through which we picked our way, noticing the hoof-prints of sambour and hog-deer everywhere, and the marks of a leopard or young tiger who had been out for a constitutional just before us. We were considerably startled by a troop of twenty large black monkeys, who fled from branch to branch at our approach, and made the forest resound with their cries.

Just at the margin of this belt, I found a very beautiful flower, growing low down amongst the grass. It sprang directly from a simple bulbous root, the single flower being borne at the end of the upright stem, in colour a deep velvety purple, with the base of the petals bright yellow. There were no leaves visible, small white scales taking their place. But the most interesting part was the arrangement by which the pollen was dusted on to the bees, in order that it might be conveyed by them to the neighbouring flowers. In the throat of the tube formed by the petals were the

stamens, and each pollen-laden anther rested along the roof of the flower, but from it another abortive anther hung down and almost closed the passage. Thus, when a bee entered the flower and made for the honey cell, placed far back, he found the way blocked, and, pressing against the slight obstruction, brought the pollen brushes down on the top of his thorax like the strikers of a piano, and so got covered with the yellow dust.

Then into the sun again; and we were on the far side of the ridge, and our view wandered over the wonderful Poothpara Thund. A most extensive view! much the same as that from the Varlavachen bungalow, but almost more comprehensive. It was impossible to look over this region without a feeling of satisfaction, in these days of dense populations, that there was still so much land to spare, and unopened even, for the myriads of India. For my part, I do not think we are within measurable distance of the time when the whole world will be a parish—an idea dreadful to think of. Population undoubtedly increases to an alarming extent in every quarter of the globe, but an industrious calculator tells us the whole human

race could find standing room on the Isle of Wight, and while there are such tracts as these Indian hills to be opened and cultivated, we cannot call ourselves cramped for room.

Right away from our feet the great valley stretched as far as we could see, a vast expanse of undulating forest, as smooth and close as velvet, but formed in reality of countless thousands of mighty trees and labyrinths of creepers. One small hill—which looked so close, in comparison to the wide expanse, that it seemed one might walk to it in half an hour—my friend told me, was two days' journey away on horseback; so how far must it have been to the great wall of rocks which rose above the ocean of green jungle on the horizon to the south and westward? Even there our view did not stop, for those remote cliffs were crowned with wide fields of waving grass and darker patches of jungle and trees. I think I never saw a scene which impressed me more with its vastness and its silent, deep loneliness; for our glance passed over no habitation of men, except the fastnesses of the jungle-wallahs and the haunts of elephants.

It was a long time before we could continue

our walk, so enchanting was the scene; and when we did, it was to talk of what effect the newly rediscovered gold mines of the Palghaut river would have on this district, and to speculate as to whether there was any gold up here. L—— feared the gold mining operations would be very bad for the plantations, by drawing away all the labour and making everything too expensive; and, so chatting, we made our way along the side of the ridge.

But it was by no means easy progress. The tall dry grass grew up to our shoulders, and we looked more as if we were swimming than walking on dry ground. Nothing was to be seen of my companion but his face, his helmet, and his hand occasionally, making desperate efforts to part the grass stems in front, and at every few steps he suddenly disappeared altogether, having stumbled over a stone, in which I frequently kept him company. The broken lime stone rocks were scattered everywhere amongst the grass roots, so that our way was as unpleasant as going a pilgrimage with unboiled peas in one's shoes, until we, by good luck, hit upon a new elephant trail, and then, the grass being trampled flat by the huge

beasts, we could at least see where we were stepping. The trail we followed seemed to have been made by fifteen or twenty elephants marching in single file the night before, and L—— was all hot to catch them up and get a shot with the rifle I carried; so we made the best pace we could, pushing through thickets of dwarf date-palm—which, by the way, only grow on these open hillsides—scrambling often on hands and knees over bare ledges of rocks, where the heat of the mid-day sun above and the radiation from the hard surface nearly roasted us. My companion would give me no rest, but led me on, in and out of nullahs, over rocks, through thickets, until the trail entered the jungle on top of the ridge, and a few minutes more hard scrambling brought us to a beautiful bit of greensward under a patriarchal fig tree, from which many creepers hung down in graceful festoons, and gay little butterflies hovered about in the stray gleams of sunshine which found their way through the thick green roof of foliage. It was one of those pleasant spots always to be matched in woodland countries, but which, when found in India, artists sketch and take home to the

old country with them, and say, "Behold the tropics!" whereat the stay-at-home "Britisher" is much edified, and concludes every part of India is equally pleasant. Here the elephants had been taking their noonday rest, for the ground was trampled down and many branches broken, etc. In fact, it may have been our own footsteps which frightened them away; they certainly had not been gone long. But it was useless and dangerous to follow them into the thick jungle; so we let ourselves cool down, and then regained the grassy hillside and continued our swimming walk. At last we found the work was too hard under such a powerful sun; so we camped a little after mid-day by the side of a tree-grown watercourse, and proceeded to make our modest tiffin. The spot was a very likely one for tigers—just the kind of place they choose to spend the hot hours in—and hardly had we sat down, and I was spreading some mustard with scientific accuracy on a mutton sandwich, when my companion called out suddenly, "Look sharp!" Down went the sandwich into the dust, and I sprang up, gun in hand. Some big animal undoubtedly broke away from the nullah, and came up

through the long grass at us, for we saw the grass wave and part before it like water under the bows of a ship in full sail, though we could not see the beast itself. But when it was within thirty yards of us, L—— suddenly raised the revolver he carried, and fired, and the animal forthwith changed its course and gained the jungle without showing the colour of its hide. Perhaps it was fortunate for us it did so, as there was no open ground in front, and consequently a snap shot would have been all I could have got.

Very little proper shooting can be done in this way. We started too late in the day. Had we been by this nullah and up a tree at daybreak, we should have stood a good chance of a shot or two; but all the big game—more careful of themselves than such reckless young Englishmen as we—creep into the cool jungle when the sun grows hot, and leave the hillsides to the lizards. We saw, however, plenty of traces of game; the most numerous being the little holes scraped by bears when searching for roots and, as I expect, the nests of honey-making ground bees; and also the places where sambour deer had been

lying out under the willow-like wild gooseberry tree, the fruit of which is their special delight. At the margins of the nullahs, bison, wild dog, and elephant "spoor" of all ages was numerous; so the country was clearly "gamey."

We finished our repast in peace, and took a delightful siesta, lying at full length under the shade of the trees, and gazing over the mighty forests, through the curling blue smoke of our pipes—a "bird's-eye" view, perhaps I might dare to say,—till the sun began to fall low in the sky, and then we gathered up our traps, and proceeded to retrace our steps through the long grass —a most toilsome and tedious process, which set me thinking how it might be overcome. In a little time a bright idea occurred to me, and calling out to L——, who was up to his eyes in dry herbage, I proposed, as there did not seem to be anybody but ourselves on the hills, to set fire to the grass. No sooner said than done. My companion was on his knees in a moment with a box of matches, and as soon as he had put a light into the grass, a bright crimson flame shot high into the air, and we turned and ran for our lives to windward. I never saw anything burn as that hill did. In

half a minute the fire was twenty yards wide and utterly beyond human control. In a minute it was a seething mass of flame, stretching far to the right and left; and then, under the influence of a fresh breeze, it advanced leaping and crackling up the hillside, like the long line of an army, beneath a dense canopy of smoke. Nothing could resist it! Before it lay the long yellow grass that had been drying for a month under a fierce Indian sun, and as the fire roared up the mountain, the herbage burst into yellow flame; the rocks split with dull thuds amongst showers of sparks; tall bamboos struggled for a moment while the flame twined round them like a bright-flowered creeper, and then came crashing down; until at last the jungle on top of the ridge was reached, and the flames surged against the dense green barrier, leaping to the tops of the trees and frightening out scores of bewildered birds, while the bushes and stems, too green to burn, snapped and withered. Just as the waves during a gale rush on a rock-bound coast, and leap up and burst in spray against the unshaken wall of cliff, so the long array of flame hurled itself in sheets on the face of the forest, and then, finding

all its endeavours useless, made a few final spurts, and died away as suddenly as it had risen.

The measure was most successful as far as we were concerned, for the hillside, which had been such toilsome walking in the morning, was now as bare as the clean-shaven head of a Hindoo; and instead of swimming in long grass, we marched along over a light layer of charcoal, and, seeing the rocks and stones, were enabled to save ourselves from many tumbles.

One curious thing was that, although we had walked all the early part of the day without noticing more than two or three hawks far up in the sky, no sooner was the wide black flag of the smoke unfurled over the hill, than birds of prey of all sizes appeared on every side of us, and commenced hawking along the line in rear of the fire. Who shall say they have no reason? They must have benefited by many other jungle fires, and treasured their knowledge like any human beings; for when the smoke rose, they gathered from all parts, by tens and scores, to pick up the snakes and lizards. It really seemed as though they were born of the smoke, for they came shooting down through it, though none

had been visible before. Thus our walk ended; and though our bag was *nil*, owing to the late start, the beautiful view and pleasant mountain air will not easily be forgotten by either of us.

CHAPTER X.

THE FEVER-FIEND.

When anything unpleasant is in store for me, I like to face it as soon as possible; and consequently, as there was no hope of escaping altogether from the jungle fever, I had been rather impatient for the first attack. On the 14th of February it came on, and I was able to say my curiosity was thoroughly satisfied. The first symptoms showed about breakfast-time, when a bad headache was rapidly succeeded by a fit of ague, which set me shivering; so that it was scarcely possible to stand up, and quite impossible to do any work while it lasted, which was about two hours. Then succeeded the hot stage, with sharp pains in every limb and joint, accompanied by a fierce throbbing headache and a terrible thirst, which no amount of drink could allay. In fact, from twelve o'clock to

midnight I was too ill to stand up; but then the attack passed off, and by five the next morning, though still weak, I was able to get to work.

Unfortunately this work was particularly trying, and taxed my endurance to the utmost. Our contract coolies had some time before felled half a dozen small clearings on the far side of Bungalow Hill, and about a mile from the settlement. These it was now necessary to lop and burn; but the latter operation, when it had been attempted, proved a decided failure, owing to the wood not having been sufficiently dried, so the former duty became doubly laborious. Every morning the weary pilgrimage had to be made up the slope of Bungalow Hill, over its shoulder, and down the winding rocky path on the far side to the new land close by the Manalora, our *Ultima Thule.* For a little while after our arrival things were well enough, since the dew hung about, and the sun coming above the trees just warmed us with its early beams, while the thin columns of blue smoke from yesterday's fires mounted straight up into the air, telling us how little wind there was and how hot it would be presently. And, truly,

the place soon became a Pandemonium. The ground lay six inches deep in hot white ashes, and littered with still smouldering logs of wood. At mid-day thirty or forty fires were roaring all round us, enveloping everything in dense yellow smoke, while overhead the sun blazed down as he only can in India. The coolies, gleaming with perspiration and white with ashes, piled up wood on the fires, appearing and disappearing through the smoke, while they shouted to each other in their uncouth tongues, like imps of darkness. *They* did not seem to mind it much; but to me, roasted from above, below, and on all sides, it was terribly trying. My head used to spin, and everything often danced before my eyes; but there was no help for it, since I could never bring myself to stand in the shade while my men worked in the open. Thus the long morning had to be got through, and then came the heavy tramp home to breakfast, the fording the settlement stream, and the climb through the evil-smelling coolie "lines" to my own small bungalow on top. Then the scarcely tasted breakfast was pushed away and a fresh start made, another long walk and another good

roasting, and then back again to muster; and so at last the day ended.

On top of all this, and perhaps resulting from it, I had fever three or four times, and began to feel my strength ebbing fast. Generally a sense of oppression about the head and pains in every limb heralded the approach of an attack, when I sought the shelter of the hut, and lay shivering or burning all through the long hours of the hot mid-day, while the creepers swung monotonously to and fro, and the jungle cicadæ set the forest vibrating with their horrid music. But once I was caught by my enemy when out at work, and felt the full force of his power in a way not easily forgotten. I had risen at dawn as usual, and, in particularly good spirits, accompanied the coolies to our daily purgatory; but experience was beginning to teach me that "whistling before breakfast means crying before supper," and a light heart in the morning was the certain sign of a heavy head at bedtime. The sun had scarcely topped the trees when I felt the fever coming on again, and had to make tracks for my bungalow; but too late. I took a short cut through the jungle and over some newly burnt clearings, where the coolies were

not yet at work; but as I went the fever increased, my head throbbed and swam, and my teeth began to chatter, though there was a burning sky overhead. Still I pushed on, crawling under some logs and scrambling over others; but the two miles were more than I could manage, and half-way, in the middle of a big clearing, my strength ran out, and I sank down by a log, sensible only that for all the riches which Crœsus ever owned, I could not move another step. Then came the cold fit, and the mid-day sun glared down on me for a couple of hours without for a moment checking the "shivers," which shook me from head to foot. This was again succeeded by the hot stage, when I felt my blood throbbing backwards and forwards like molten lead, and a consuming thirst drove me half mad; but there was not a drop of water to be had anywhere, and not a living thing in sight—nothing but the hot, glaring white ashes on which I was lying; and the last thing I remembered was sitting up and shouting out for water at the top of my voice. I must have fallen asleep after this, for when I roused myself the sun was low down behind the trees; and limp, weak, and fearfully dirty, I

staggered to my feet. Half an hour afterwards, a dejected-looking Englishman might have been seen mustering his thick ring of dark-skinned coolies. How it was got through goodness only knows. I have an indistinct remembrance of placing a finger on each long native name, and reading it over three or four times to get the right sound, while everything swam before me; and when the end of the column came suddenly, I went straight to my hut, locked myself in, and, just as I was, got supperless to bed.

It is curious to see how distinctly the races of the natives are marked off, although they have been living side by side for many years. Now, most of our coolies were Canarese, and a miserable, dirty, gaunt race of scarecrows; but the men of Wallenghay, who are Tamils and come up here on contract, shewed a much finer set, tall, muscular, and of a pleasant coffee colour; while their women in the plains go about clad in purple and fine raiment, with bangles tinkling on their ankles and big nose-rings—an ornament, by the way, which the Canarese women do not wear. The very fact of the Wallenghay men only taking contract work shows they like to be their

own masters and to do as they please. They are also great sawyers, and we had several couples at work cutting up logs into planks for permanent buildings, for which they got highly paid. Another race are the Malayalims, of which I had come across none until, by special invitation, I went with L—— to the "Bitter End," to see three women of that type, and was much impressed. We found them watering the young plants in the nursery, and they were noticeable directly by the way in which they kept close together and shunned the other coolies. One was an old woman, bent with age and grey-haired; another was a woman of middle age; and the last was a really good-looking girl of sixteen or seventeen. Their skins were much lighter than those of any other natives I ever saw, more approaching the tint of a native of Southern Europe than of the tropics, and their features were more finely cut than the Canarese or Tamils. Their dress, or rather lack of it, was the same; but I noticed they made the most of their scanty sarees when we approached them—a thing the other women never do, apparently deeming clothes are simply to keep one in fashion, and needless for

any other purpose. L—— says he had considerable difficulty with these three Malayalims, as he knew nothing of their language, and neither did his maistries. Where their men were he cannot tell, as they came on to his place with fifty ordinary coolies, and he knew nothing else of them. Poor creatures! they never went more than fifteen yards away from each other, and seemed very solitary.

L—— told me one thing which amused me much. His Christian name happened to be Samuel, and when a new lot of coolies came up to his place, he set them to work and gave the head man some orders, at which he salaamed, and replied, "All right, Samy; it shall be as you say." This familiarity took my friend considerably aback; but he said nothing, until presently, giving a fresh order, a small coolie girl, fresh from her native village, observed, in reply to his mandate, "Very well, Samy." This was too much, and there would have been a disturbance, but fortunately it occurred to him suddenly that it was "Swami," the Canarese for "Lord of Wisdom," by which they were calling him; and such turned out to be the truth.

Beyond our estate there was a wonderful view down the Manalora river, here of quite a respectable breadth, with dense green banks of trees on either side, and tall ferns and creepers overhanging the water; but the jungle grew so thickly it was scarcely possible to penetrate any distance without bill-men. L—— said there was one red cedar tree on top of a hill near here, the only one he has ever seen. The trees we called "white cedars" were plentiful enough, and amongst our largest timber. I roughly measured one as it lay on the ground, and found it was a hundred and ten feet from where it had been cut through to the first branch. The total height of the tree must have been nearly double. It was, perhaps, fortunate nobody took any interest in keeping the course of the Manalora open and free from obstruction, or my friend might have chanced to get reprimanded, since he had made a clearing in one place directly on the edge of the stream, and all his big trunks had fallen headlong into the water, where, of course, they would not burn. So for the next five years or so the channel will be a wild tangle of branches.

Amongst this *débris*, on the day of my visit,

I noticed a pair of beautiful little black-and-white birds, which were probably the rare *Parus nuchalis* of Jerdon, besides some small blue kingfishers, a small heron, and a sand-piper. But, in truth, no part of these jungles is very productive in bird life: a morning in the plains shows one twice as many new species as a month up here.

A large tiger had just been killed on Pardagherry, in a patch of jungle which I could see quite plainly from the windows of my hut. It seemed he was an old and well-known animal, with a decided taste for fresh beef, and had already made considerable havoc amongst the herd of cattle belonging to the native estate next to ours. One day the cows were driven up in the morning, according to custom, to graze on the grass hill, under charge of a cow-boy. All went well until three o'clock in the afternoon, when the animals were spread out and their guardian was resting under a tree, dozing in the warm shade. But he was soon roughly aroused, for a sleek, well-fed red heifer, intent on the most succulent young grass, strayed away from the others, and wandered along the margin of a shola, or patch of low jungle.

It was strolling towards death! There was a fierce growl—something yellow and black rushed forth—and the petrified cowherd saw the animal roll over with the tiger on top of it, its back broken by a single stroke from those mighty paws. But the "royal animal" does not like his meat too fresh, so he lapped a little blood, and then left the body for supper. Meanwhile the native had driven away the other cattle, and told the tale to a sporting maistry of the Dewan's estate, who forthwith took his rifle, and, getting to the dead cow, climbed a tree at dusk and waited. He sat there for several hours, but at last his patience was rewarded; for the tiger stalked out of the jungle into the moonlight, and, after sniffing the air, was about to commence his repast, when a single well-directed shot from the tree-top caught him between the shoulders, and ended his hunting for ever. Of course L—— and I were disgusted at having lost such a chance, and sent our servant over to know if the skin was to be bought; but we found the Dewan of Cochin had desired his agent to keep it for him, so we had to wait another opportunity.

That same rocky hill must be a gamey place,

as I saw a very fine bison up there a few mornings afterwards, and watched him through my glass as he stalked slowly down among the date palms, stopping every now and then to graze, or whisk his long tail about to frighten away the flies. His hide was shining black, and his horns of splendid proportions; but he was quite safe from me at that distance, so he still wanders in his native wilds. On that occasion I was too far, on a former one I was too near, to one of these noble animals; for, walking silently down a deserted trace one morning, with nothing but a light gun loaded with small shot, I suddenly put up a large solitary bison, who immediately charged at random. For a moment it was impossible to say in which direction he was moving, as the jungle was dense and nothing could be heard but the breaking of the branches and snapping of bamboos; consequently I was naturally much relieved when I caught a glimpse of the animal galloping down the valley below, and saw the tall bamboos shaking as he broke through them. Had he charged me there can be little doubt that this account would never have been penned.

An institution very usual in most districts is the Sunday outing—already alluded to—on which day the planters don their best clothes, and ride to some central spot where the bungalow of a sociable neighbour serves them for the occasion as a club-house, and they sit about chatting and smoking, till the short Indian twilight warns them to get home again. At these meetings in civilized districts the news of the week is discussed, the prospects of the next crops considered, and plans made for hunting expeditions and picnics; in fact, they are the few moments of relaxation to which the planter looks forward all the week, and the condition and prosperity of the club-house is a sure sign of the social well-being of the district. On our hills there were, unfortunately, so few English, and most of the estates were so new and required so much attention, that we had not yet started a proper club, but contented ourselves with utilizing W——'s bungalow. Thus, when Sunday morning came, we converged from all parts to Palm-tree bungalow, and made ourselves completely at home. W—— was always in the same position, with his heels on the back of a neighbouring chair, and a cheroot invariably in

full blast between his lips. He nodded to each new arrival, and waved his hand towards the table, on which stood the cigar-box and brandy and water. This was the utmost he could manage; but if absolutely forced to say anything, he replied in monosyllables, and at once enveloped himself in a cloud of smoke. So we had to entertain ourselves, and were generally successful.

Once, while rummaging about amongst W—'s miscellaneous effects, I came across a long rusty spear-head, some fourteen inches in length by two broad, and very well made, though obviously very old. On asking my host where he got it, he replied, "Dug it up yesterday—ten feet deep—new road in jungle," and again enshrouded himself in tobacco smoke. It is curious the blade should have been found at such a depth, and interesting to speculate to whom it could have belonged. It was not English, nor could it have been forged by the wild jungle men. It looked more Portuguese than Hindooesque, and probably had some hunting tale to tell, or maybe one of homicide, if we could get at it.

While we derived what amusement we could

in this way each Sunday, our coolies were also enjoying themselves after their fashion, and laying in a store of provisions for the next week. They had received their pay on Saturday afternoon, so when Sunday morning came they put some castor oil on their hair, decked out their persons with all the bangles and finery they possessed, and then, with empty gunny bags and cocoa-nut shells, they streamed by my hut—men, women, and children—on their way to the head of the ghaut, where a great weekly bazaar was held, and merchants and grain dealers from the lowlands came up with strings of white rice-laden bullocks and packs of gay-coloured cloths and native jewellery. They also brought up with them what we should have been better pleased if they had left behind them, namely, plentiful supplies of arrack—a coarse sort of rum distilled from the palm tree—and cheap and bad but very fiery brandy; and on these dreadful liquors the coolies spent their hard-won annas, and drank in a day what should support them for a week. The result was that on Monday our morning muster was always very thinly attended, and we never hoped to get much work done. At

these bazaars the coolies bought their rice and chillies for the next week, and the maistries even purchased sheep and chickens occasionally; but the only form of animal food which I ever saw a coolie purchase was a badly cured fish, which looked much like a pike, and had been split open and roughly dried between boards. Once I walked home behind a party of workmen who possessed one of these "appetisers" amongst their other provisions, and it was an experience never to be forgotten. It would not have surprised me if all the tigers, wolves, and foxes in the neighbouring jungles had been attracted by the scent, and come sniffing after us.

It seemed these bazaars, with their fatal supplies of arrack and cheap brandy, stirred even the mild-tempered coolies up to deeds of violence; and free fights sometimes took place. Of this we had an unpleasant proof once, for while at chota hazri, I was astonished to see three native peons and a sergeant come into my verandah and make their salaams. The headman was dressed in black, with scarlet braid and a scarlet turban. He had a long curved talwar at his side, while his satellites were

equally well dressed and armed. They presented me with a document written in English and Tamil, to the effect that there had been considerable disturbances in the last bazaar at the head of the ghaut, in which "sundry and several" Pardagherry coolies had attacked the stall of a grain merchant suspected of giving bad measures, and had stolen the grain and beaten the native merchant; wherefore the Englishman in charge of the said estate was requested to hand over the "undermentioned natives" to the Raja's peons who brought the warrant. Then followed the names of many of our men and of all the maistries. Now, we could spare a few men, but the maistries were too valuable, and I told the officer so; whereupon he said, "What the sahib wished must be." So the coolies were mustered, and then the peons secured their astonished prey. I was sorry for them, but it was not possible to disregard the warrant, as the authorities had taken the trouble to send it up, and our coolies shortly afterwards returned to the hills none the worse for a short detention.

Perhaps the reader will say "*toujours* Pardagherry" if I write anything more about that

big mountain; but the truth was it formed so prominent a feature in our landscape, that we could not be indifferent to its various changes. In the monsoon it grew emerald green and ribbed with white stripes of falling streams; and when the hot weather came and dried up the shallow soil, the grass seeded, withered, and turned brown, and we knew sooner or later it would be burned. Perhaps the jungle men might fire it, or two bamboos, dry and brittle, rubbed together by the north-west breezes might kindle the flame, while our recent experiences in firing another grass hill told how quickly the flames would spread. So an eager watch was kept; and sure enough, returning from work one evening, a heavy column of smoke was ascending into the sky from the very summit of the grey old hill. As darkness came on the fire rolled into sight, and we sat in the verandah in our armchairs, watching the beautiful scene at our leisure. The flame sprang over the hill, dyeing the moonless black sky a blood red, and then advanced slowly down the hillside in a wide semicircle. But it was actually going against the wind, and, consequently, there was not the furious rush which

I have mentioned in a similar instance. Instead of this, the long array of crimson light fought its way down yard by yard, now going out in one place, and anon shooting up high and bright from a thicket of date-palms and cuscus grass, and then rallying its forces and carrying in a sudden rush the patches it had left unburnt. At one time a thousand separate fires were gleaming in the blackness of the night, and it looked like nothing so much as a big camp. Again the hill was encircled with a complete halo of blaze, all reflected on the smoke overhead; and then the flames would creep into the dry bed of a grass-grown nullah, and, finding there plenty of fuel, would outstrip the rest of the advancing line, and pour rapidly down towards the valley, like a stream of molten lava. All night long the hill flared, and its crimson reflections lit up our rooms when we turned in. But the conflagration was over by the next morning, and there was our old friend the hill, scorched, blackened, and charred from head to foot, the ugliest object that could be, its head hidden in a shroud of thick smoke. We were positively downhearted about it, and L—— expressed our common feelings when he said

mournfully, "Poor old mountain! I wish it would rain, so that he might get another green coat."

When the hills burn the planters know the worst of the fever season is at hand. Already we had heard from the Wynnaad that three-fourths of the men there were down with fever, and our own jungles were very unhealthy. D—— and L—— had fever constantly, and I took my turn several times; while "the stoker" assured us cheerfully that in May we should be able to "cut the malaria with a knife," and might expect an attack of fever every other twenty-four hours. This set me thinking of a holiday, in order to recruit my energies for the encounter; and, as D—— had been away again at Palghaut—this time to celebrate his birthday—leaving me to look after four or five hundred coolies, I was beginning to think my "outing" should come next.

CHAPTER XI.

JUNGLE FESTIVITIES.

The coolie is not entirely without religion, though it is one chiefly made up of superstitions and deeply contaminated with the strange and fantastic fetish worship of the aboriginal tribes —peoples who have roamed these jungles since the remote ages, and have since been overcome there by succeeding waves of northern invaders. But these wild superstitions are grafted on the stock of Hinduism, which is the prevailing religion of the south of India. Thus, our coolies wore the red spots and parti-coloured trident of Vishnu on their forehead, and would yet eat the flesh of monkeys, when they could get it, or drink strong spirits without a misgiving. Perhaps on our hills they were on their worst behaviour, and the famine had made

them careless of strict rules—it is very hard to be virtuous on an empty stomach.

All over the estate there were samee trees at conspicuous spots, and generally at cross-roads. Under these, strange little shrines were built just big enough for a man to kneel in, and made of green boughs plastered over with mud. The figures inside varied considerably. In one close to my hut there was a slab of wood with a roughly carved image of a cross-legged deity on it, and a three-pronged fork with the two outer prongs painted white, and the inner one red, stuck in the ground by the side. This lay right in our track as we went to work every day, and each coolie, as he or she passed, salaamed to the little idol—a proceeding which hindered the march, but they would not work well until it had been got through. In another little temple, not so well endowed as the former, there were two small mud cones on the floor, on the top of one of which white paint was poured, and on the other red. At this shrine a bit of ground had been cleared of weeds and leaves, and there every Tuesday afternoon (apparently the coolie Sunday) they congregated and killed a chicken or a sheep, if they

had one, and made a burra puja, or offering, afterwards salaaming and rubbing their foreheads on the ground in front of the little mud pyramids, which, however, it should be clearly remembered, they no more worshipped than a Christian worships the altar when he kneels down in front of it. It was simply that the shrine was the abode of a divinity, and they represented the Invisible according to their means. For myself, I always reverenced these little places, and would no more have thought of disarranging one than I would blow out the tiny votive lamp of an Italian wayside chapel. The men killed sheep and ate them there, but the women also made small offerings; and on a pointed stick by the entrance of the temple were a number of glass bangles freshly taken from the wrists of the votaries, which remained there untouched by any hand. Whether or not coolies had much faith in charms was difficult to say; they did not wear many about their persons; but there was a handsome brown-and-yellow flower, the Indian marigold, which seemed to find especial favour, and one of the prettiest habits of the native women was the way in which they twined bunches of these showy flowers amongst

their shining black tresses. The effect was very pleasing. These flowers did not grow wild in the forests, but there were plenty of them about the older bungalows, whence they were fetched on grand occasions, to deck the women-folk and strew the floor of the temples.

As for birth, marriage, or death ceremonies, I can say very little from observation. The population of the "lines" had been increased by some small brown babies in the last month or so, but without any visible rejoicings. As for marriages, they were probably put off until better times; and though there had been very many subjects for burying, these were interred with few funeral honours. In fact, even the nearest kindred of a departed coolie seemed to think the sooner he was forgotten the better, for they raised no memorials over his narrow cell. There seemed to be some sort of ill-defined desire to put the dead on a peninsula with running water on as many sides as might be—a trace, perhaps, of that wide-spread and strange idea that a stream is a safeguard against evil spirits, of which there are fragments in the legends and superstitions of every land, from

the "bush" of Australia to the forests of North America.

A veritable "burra tumasha," however, came off once, and was an interesting spectacle. The time for which some two hundred of our coolies stood engaged having expired, their headman begged permission to go away, with all their belongings, and plant rice in their own country. This was granted, and they informed us of their intention of holding a grand feast before they left; so Saturday was a holiday, and, having received all arrears of pay on Friday afternoon, they owned plenty of rupees. Myself and L—— were away all day, but, getting back at dusk, we found a large square of ground at the top of the ridge overlooking the settlement carefully prepared and raked as smooth as a flower bed. This was the banqueting hall, and was thickly hedged round with green branches, while some three hundred little holes were made in lines inside—the plates of the expected guests. Adjoining this was another enclosure for a kitchen, with ten stone fireplaces, and here all day long twenty men had been at work cooking rice and various curry stuffs in red clay chatties, and as they were done, piling them up in huge

heaps on palm-leaf mats, the odour from which was really most satisfactory as we walked by hungry and tired ; indeed, we wished we had been invited. L—— dined in my hut, and we missed the first act, which consisted of dressing a coolie up in satanic costume to represent the evil spirits of the jungle, and, after subjecting him to all sorts of indignities, expelling him from the lines, by beating and kicking him until he took refuge in the forest beyond. But though we only heard the noise and the shouting, our servant explained this opening to us, and we hurried through our meal to be in time for the next scene.

Just as our cheroots were lighted, the uproar at the "lines" increased, and a procession came up the hill towards us, escorted by several hundred coolies, a couple of hundred of whom were bearing lighted torches. At the head of the column were five men, wearing all but no clothing, armed with long bamboos, with which they fenced with each other and beat the ground, all the while shouting and dancing in the wildest manner until the perspiration poured off them. Next came the handsomest coolie boy on the estate, Bulgoor Jowra, with

all the male finery the "lines" could muster piled on his little body, and the broad trident of the mighty Vishnu painted clear on his forehead. He looked very sedate and calm, keeping a proud control of his countenance, all his individuality being sternly merged in the character assumed. By the hand he led the prettiest little brown-skinned girl we possessed, by name Jowrie, and about fourteen years old. She was equally sedate, and came wrapped in a brilliant scarlet saree, with silver and glass bangles all up her arms and on her ankles, her black hair done up in a tight knot behind and adorned with bright samee flowers; on her head a broad shining brass lotah, piled up with jungle fruit and bright leaves, and in her nose and ears little gold stud-like ornaments. She really looked very fascinating under the flaring light of the torches—a real little brown rural goddess. Meanwhile, tomtoms were beaten, crackers fired, and rockets let off, the coolies shouting at the top of their voices, and everybody dancing wildly, except the grave little pair in the centre, while the procession went up the hill and took its way to each samee place in turn. At every fifteen yards little platters

of green banana leaves were placed in a line on the ground, and a small quantity of boiled rice piled up on each. When the advance-guard of bamboo men reached these, they left off shouting and capering for a moment, and, stooping down, ate the grain from the leaves, carefully keeping their hands behind their backs meanwhile. At last, but not till near midnight, the procession reached the banqueting floor, where the torches were stuck in the walls of green boughs, and the three hundred coolies sat down to a grand feast; and for a long time we, the masters, listened to their simple merriment, and watched the happy shadows under the brightly illuminated forest trees, glad to see our people for once "jolly."

I slept very well until about 3 a.m., when the revellers came back on their way to the "lines," and the idea occurred to them to serenade me, which they proceeded to do, Vishnu and his little associate standing in my verandah and singing an impromptu song about me, which I thought so very courteous of two such exalted individuals, that I rose to make them salaams and gave them some bright new silver rupees, thereby pleasing the small deities considerably.

There was not much novelty now in our work. The pitting was almost done for the season, most of the fresh clearings had been burnt, and presently we should begin to think of planting, and opening new roads, the usual wet weather labour. My own experiences swung backwards and forwards between heavy daily work and frequent attacks of fever, which left me hardly strength to walk. On one of these occasions, being half delirious in the hot stage, I called my boy in, and, giving him a pair of lamp scissors, ordered him to cut my hair off. He was not, however, a gifted hair-dresser; and though the process was refreshing at the time, I was not fit to be photographed for some while afterwards. In spite of the fever, it was necessary to look after the whole estate, as D—— went away again to Calicut, to see the doctor about his liver, which always had something wrong with it. After a month of very severe work, things, however, became considerably easier, owing to the departure of two hundred of our coolies for their own country, and the arrival of the superintendent, with his family, from a long absence in the lowlands. They quartered themselves on Bun-

galow Hill, in a rough wooden shed which had been hastily run up for them; and thus there were now two ladies in our jungle, Mrs. F—— and Mrs. R——, with two small children of the latter.

The heat of the noonday was only equalled by the chilliness of the early morning even in the hot season. Thus, turning out on the 3rd of April at 5.30, the whole forest was enveloped in a dense white veil of mist, impenetrable to the eye at ten or twelve yards' distance. As it happened, this was the Telugu New Year's Day, and the coolies, always glad of any pretence for a holiday, had "struck" in a body. No one would do a bit of work, so I went up Bungalow Hill to pay my respects to Mrs. R——. Following the winding upward track which had recently been made, the mist grew thinner as the elevation increased, until, reaching the clearing in the centre of which the bungalow stands, the sun was shining brightly overhead and the air blew fresh and pleasant. But looking back a most singular and beautiful sight was seen. The whole of our district, which lay like a huge ditch between two great ridges, was enveloped in grey mist,

nothing being visible of the forest from my position, but all its dark folds hidden in a smooth milk-white sea of vapour. Far away, however, to the northward, like islands in a deep bay, stood out the little bungalows of Polyampara, Poothpara, Comlocoda, and Varlavachen, each on its little hill. In fact, it looked exactly like a Norwegian fiord at sunrise—the mist most perfectly resembling water, and the great hills on either side hedging it as high cliffs shut in those inlets. This lasted a long time, even after the sun was well up in the sky; and when at last the fog melted and the trees gradually appeared, the forest stood dripping with moisture, and the moss and ferns were as bright, fresh, and green as after the first monsoon shower.

Among the vegetation fed by this moisture is a broad-leafed bush, which comes into life in a most curious way wherever light is let into the jungle, so that the powers of suspended vitality possessed by its germs would be an interesting study for a better botanist than myself. Even the fall of a tree and the consequent gap created in the sun-proof ceiling of the forest causes this bush to spring up on the spot, but it is to be

seen in greatest profusion along the sides of the older clearings, where it grows in undisturbed peace, its light green foliage forming a wide ribbon between the brown soil and the darker tree-tops.

Another plant following the planter's footsteps, and hateful to him from the persistency with which it grows amongst the coffee, is the Spanish needle, a plant imported, like many others, by the Portuguese. Unfortunately it has outlasted the raj of those nations, and has established itself firmly in its adopted country. Being provided by nature with seeds armed with innumerable small hooked spines, every passing animal or human being assists in propagating it by carrying to "fresh fields and pastures new" the unwelcome germs, which, once established, are anything but easy to eradicate. But the great dread of the coolies in the jungle is another plant of quite a different kind—a tall, pale-stemmed, sickly looking bush, with long-pointed, whitish-green leaves. Woe to the luckless mortal who lets those same harmless-looking leaves touch his bare flesh! He will not forget it for many a day, for this bush is the dreaded Mealum-ma or stinging shrub—

the nettle of Timor, or "Devil's leaf"—which in the forests of Nepal also produces serious effects on any person brushing against it. Even here our coolies said they got fever if stung by it only very lightly, and they consequently avoided the bush with the utmost circumspection. Up amongst the branches of the trees, and well-nigh out of sight, there hung many orchids—*Dendrobia* and parasitical plants—but they are not commonly beautiful. If the orchids somewhat fail to strike the observer, there are lovelier vegetable products on the ground just above it which deserve his attention, and if he be a specialist in that way, he will find plenty of employment amongst the fungi and moulds. The most common of these was a small branching fungus which might be mistaken for moss by a careless observer. It was very conspicuous, as its own colour was a pearly white, and it throve nowhere, according to my observations, except on the black and charred logs of wood lying about the clearings. These relics of the fallen forest it decked with sheets of the finest and most delicate white lace, prettier and more faultless than anything man could make. Other fungi were purple or vermilion, and clustered

thick on the stems of dying trees; and a small white variety, with a hair-like stem and a very mobile bell-shaped head, sprang from trunks already returning to mother earth. Wherever such a stem lay on the ground covered with leaves and moss, the little fairy stools grew up along it, and accurately marked out its grave to the passer-by. Then there were larger and more striking sorts, one of which was a spongy-stemmed structure with a bright vermilion head, shaped much like an inverted teacup, from the rim of which hung down a most curious crinoline of open lace-like material, with meshes too small for a bee to get through, but not so close as to prevent the stem in the centre from being seen.

Meanwhile I was patiently awaiting the return of "the stoker," whose liver always detained him when he got into pleasant quarters. As it was, his absence had cost me an invitation for two weeks' tiger shooting in the far north, and the work continued still very hard, as the superintendent was feeble and rarely left his bungalow. Thus all the heaviest of the toil fell on my shoulders.

The gay Cecil H—— had recently been

taking a holiday, and returned "like a giant refreshed." There are all sorts of chic-dorces in every coffee district, but H—— was one of the most amusing in our neighbourhood. His particular mania was the keeping of pets, and, not content with dispensing hospitality to his human neighbours, he surrounded himself with varieties of furred and feathered creatures. Only a short time before, his bungalow had been enlivened by the arrival of what he proudly assured every one were two pure-bred bull-dog puppies, and he even whispered a fearfully long price as that which he had given for them. For some time they reigned supreme in his affections, but as they grew up their legs got longer, their ears sharper, and gradually they lost all resemblance to bull-dogs; so at last not even H—— could say anything more for them than that they were nondescripts, with a larger proportion of mongrel blood in them than anything else. He then transferred his affections to three Dorking hens and a cock, which he purchased at Madras during his last visit, having formed wide and philanthropical views of improving the breed of fowls all over the district. Unfortunately the hens wholly declined to lay any eggs; so this great reform came to nothing.

CHAPTER XII.

A HOLIDAY RUN.

My last chapter left me in a wretched hut, at which an Irishman would turn up his nose, in the backwoods of a wild district. But now I have to record a brief but very enjoyable holiday run northward, through the Deccan and Hyderabad to Bombay, and a short stay in that most delightful of Indian towns.

After many bouts of fever, the first opportunity of a change was gladly seized; so, one morning, having handed over the care of the estate to my associate D——, who came up from the lowlands much improved in health, I found myself in light marching order, with my little luggage carried by a coolie, on the way to Polyampara. While breakfasting there, a munchiel and a string of bearers, previously written for, arrived, and, taking up their quar-

ters in the verandah, set to work chewing the inevitable betel-nut as they awaited the sahib's pleasure. But the sahib was not to be hurried, for now he was for a while gloriously free, with nothing to do, no troublesome coolies to be driven to work, civilization and all its delightful comforts in front of him—which, by the way, none can appreciate until they have gone without them for a time. The dark close jungle and its feverish air were about to be left far behind; thus the after-breakfast cheroot was prolonged, while G. D—— chatted away and narrated how he had poisoned a goat which a tiger had killed close by, and how H——'s dogs had found the big beast quite dead five miles off from the bait. At last, tumbling into the luxurious munchiel, with many promises to bring back a cargo of new books and papers, I shook hands with my genial host and effected a start for the rocky ghaut road.

Some mention has already been made of this mode of travelling. In the early morning it is especially pleasant. There is a comfortable blue hammock underneath, and overhead a wide awning with a neat red-and-white-striped fringe to keep off the sun, as one lies at full length

while the bearers trot along to their monotonous song, "Um bay! um bay! how hi! how hi!" etc., etc., and the scenery passes under one's eyes like a long picture-book of which some invisible hand turns the leaves. And then, too, for a considerable part of my way, the great forest trees shaded the path and made it delightfully cool. But ere long there was a different experience in store for me. Rapidly descending by all the well-known spots, turning now sharp to the right, now to the left, as the road zigzagged ever downwards, about midday we began to feel the real heat of the plains in the "hot weather," and the trees grew browner and threw less and less shade, till the rattans and bamboos of the upper jungles were left far above. Copious perspiration began to trickle down the bare backs of the men in front, and the changes from shoulder to shoulder of the creaking bamboo poles, from which I depended like a bale of cotton, became more and more frequent.

Here I saw for the first time in India a troop of small grey monkeys, who were sitting on a tree by the roadside, their tails hanging over the branches, and themselves looking as wise

and serious as a meeting of the Royal Society. One of them was eating a nut as we came along, but he paid very little attention to the traveller, simply glancing sadly at me for a moment and then taking another bite, after which he scratched himself and walked along the branch to look for fresh food. There is something very striking in the stoicism of a monkey's indifference. I should be more inclined to think he was descended from some much-suffering tribe of the human race—some wild stock of hillmen, grown hairy and driven by hard times to an arboreal life—than to credit that he himself is the ancestor of savages.

Here, too, there were some new trees, one which had already flowered and was covered with long scimitar-shaped pods of a purple colour, yet destitute of leaves. But most conspicuous, and tinging the whole hillside yellow in places, was the lovely amultas (*Cassia fistula*), a tree at this season hidden in a cascade of golden clusters of blossom—like nothing so much as an English laburnum—a most beautiful tree, which delighted me much when I first saw it. But the sun overhead was too fierce for the smaller plants; the grasses were dried up,

the ferns shrunk to the smallest dimensions, the mosses grey and withered. Only one small plant held up its head in this torrid zone, and it was a low-growing tuft of spreading leaves, with one large white lily-like flower rising from the centre. It seemed totally indifferent to the glare even of an Indian summer, and flourished cool and fresh on the rocks where I could scarcely bear to lay my hand, and which even the lizards thought several degrees too warm.

In spite of the heat, however, mine was a most enjoyable journey down; but at last it came to an end, and by 4 p.m. I was at tiffin in the ever-ready bungalow of Widow Vladimir at Wallenghay, with the neat hostess and her pretty little daughter trotting about and making themselves useful. The latter was a really nice little native, with tinkling bangles on her ankles and wrists, and little gold studs set with small bits of blue glass in her tiny nose; but, alas! she followed the custom of the village, and her ears were split at the bottom in order that she might wear in each a disc of cardboard as big as a rupee, which made those once charming little organs nearly as wide as

a young elephant's. As these cardboard rings are enlarged every year by the native women, the result, in course of time, is that the lower part of their ears hangs down in a wide loop of flesh, and I have seen old women with whom it nearly reached to the shoulder.

Tiffin over, there was a bandy waiting for me in the court-yard, and two huge white bullocks on either side of the pole, with Tamil proverbs burnt into their sides to keep them from misfortune. These are not always effective, as subsequent experience proved. My cattle bore pointed brass ornaments on their horn-tips, and were altogether a very fine pair for the locality, seeming to be fully alive to their own importance. Without more delay, I pitched my belongings into the thick layer of rice straw on the floor of the bandy, and, jumping in myself, we were soon meandering through the native village, *en route* for Palghaut, just as dusk was coming on. But we were destined to come to grief, in spite of our "proud array," before we reached it.

Gradually, as the village and the scent of the cow-dung fires faded away behind, the short twilight deepened into dusk. At first the sky

was amber-coloured, and the palms stood out against it clear and black, with all the scattered topes showing upon the gold of the sunset like ebony fretwork. A shallow river, through which the white oxen went slowly, splashing and taking an occasional draught, rippled a patchwork of shifting gold and sombre green shadows, under the evening sky, till the amber colour faded into salmon-tint and grey, and deepened rapidly to the indigo of dusk. Before the cattle had finished dripping from their evening bath, the stars came out overhead, and the hoot of an owl from the neighbouring banian grove told us it was night. Things went very peacefully for some distance, and I was meditating, well contented, under the soothing influence of a choice cheroot, when my enjoyment was rudely broken by a sudden and severe shock, which seemed to try every joint in the flimsy structure in which I was lying. On investigation, it turned out that a palm tree had broken down across the road quite recently, but there was just room for our intelligent animals to pass underneath, and they had done so; but the high palm-mat roof of the bandy had struck fairly against the stem, and

brought us to a very sudden standstill. Needless to say, the driver was asleep; but, seeing how nearly I had been so myself, I could not blame him much.

We passed the obstruction by going into the ditch, and again continued our journey. Once more we meandered under black palm groves or over open starlit plains; and, comfortably buried in the deep rice straw, with all my baggage around me, I had been asleep for an hour or so, when a sudden shout from the driver made me spring up; yet, quicker than I could move, I saw the stars dart across the opening of the cart in front, and was immediately thrown heavily against the matted side; and then there was a consciousness of everything going round, a cloud of straw and baggage, and next a sudden and total stoppage, after a final shock which sent me out at the far end.

On getting my senses back the sight was curious enough. In the foreground must be pictured the overturned bandy, with its wheels spinning in the air, and by it the high bank, with the road overhead down which we had rolled. The white oxen, thanks to the flim-

siness of their harness, were loose and unhurt, and the byl-wallah was pulling their tails and calling to Vishnu and Shiva to help us. All round the moon was shining brilliantly upon the glistening rice swamps, broken here and there by topes of palms and strips of deep jungle, whence, every now and then, a jackal broke into a loud and mournful howl; but nowhere could there be seen the smallest signs of habitations of man. As for myself, I was on my hands and knees in the deep black mud of the paddy-field, with all my neat belongings scattered around, and everything in a fearful mess. But no bones were broken, and, with the exception of a cut across the forehead, I was uninjured; so, setting fire to a heap of the straw to give us light, myself and the bandy-wallah set to work to get the cart on its wheels again. It was a very hard job, and we reeled and floundered about in the mud in an astonishing way, so that, had we not possessed just the requisite muscle between us, we must have stayed there all night. But at last the ponderous vehicle was balanced on one wheel, and a final effort righted the cart, which went over with a joggle upon its wheels again.

Then, hitching the white cattle to the pole, it was drawn up the bank with a sad amount of tail-twisting, and stood once more on the road. Throwing in my baggage, and threatening the dusky-skinned driver with dire vengeance if he tried my patience again, we continued our way towards Palghaut; and two hours later, after splashing through the shallow moonlit river which marks the boundary between British soil and the native territory of Cochin, we jogged calmly into that town, and through the silent, shadowy native streets, to the travellers' bungalow.

Leaving Palghaut the next morning by the first eastward-bound train (not due till 1.30 p.m., by-the-by), as long as daylight lasted the country on either side looked flat, fertile, and populous, judging from the numerous stations passed, but not particularly striking or varied in scenery. Here, for the first time during my stay in India, I saw the prickly-pear and whitish-green aloe growing as hedges along the line. Both are said to be Portuguese importations, but with doubtful reason. As we passed, it was very noticeable that nearly all the aloes had had the hard green roll of leaves which

grows in the centre of each plant cut out; and asking the reason from a fellow-passenger, he said it was done by wandering famine coolies, who cook and eat it, although nauseous and unwholesome.

At Erode Junction, where a line branches off to Trichinopoly, famous for its cheroots, the half-caste guard came to the carriage and asked if the sahibs desired to dine at Salem, fifty miles further on. Being told we did, he telegraphed instructions ahead, and as we sped along through the fast-gathering darkness, there was the comforting thought that a substantial meal was preparing for the travellers. Surely enough, when we jolted and rattled into Salem, the refreshment-room was brightly lighted up, showing a long table set with china and dishes; and the English passengers speedily made their way through the struggling, noisy crowd of natives on the platform, and fell to work on the provend. There were only fifteen minutes allowed, though, for five courses; so we had little time for talking. On my left was an engineer officer, who asked me to pass the salt early in the meal, but did not speak again. On my right was a young lady in white and pink.

She requested some ice, and permitting me to slip the biggest lump I could find into her claret, briefly said, "Thank you," and bowed; but no other word broke the serious business of the moment—the knives and forks had it all their own way. I was just rescuing the twentieth moth from my tankard of bottled beer, and thinking what I would take next, when the door flew open, and an official said something to the effect that if the sahibs were ready the train was; so there was a general scramble for what remained. We finished our liquids, regardless of moths and beetles; the butler-wallah ran about wildly with change and bills; there was donning of helmets and lighting of cigars, and inquiries in every language and voice for carriages, friends, and lost packages; after which, somehow or other, we settled down, and with a few snorts from the engine, a good deal of whistling and waving of lanterns by the guards, we rattled out of Salem Station, and were once more flying across the cool, open Southern Indian country.

Arconum, another junction close to Madras, and 450 miles from Palghaut, was reached at 4.30 a.m. the next morning; and here, emerging

upon the platform with my luggage, I learned with dismay that there was no train northward to Bombay until eight the next evening, so here was the prospect of a long wait before me. I tried to go to sleep in the waiting-room, but it was too stuffy, and, indeed, enough sleep had already been obtained in the train; so, with coat-collar turned up, and glowing cheroot stuck fast between my teeth, I proceeded to inhale the fresh morning air while walking up and down the platform—not perhaps a very romantic place, but even there the Indian dawn was lovely and full of interest to one who can admire Nature anywhere and in any mood. I observed the first local residents to rouse up and start in search of a breakfast were the crows. They came flitting over the sea-blue sky just before the dawn by twos and threes, rousing the parrots and mynas and the gossiping "nine sisters" with their noisy caws. And then came a couple of little striped squirrels, undoubtedly more honest than the crows, and, as all honest beings should be, light-hearted. No sooner were they awake than they flicked their tails, gave a "good-day" squeak or two, and, at once set to work on the never-ending game of

hide-and-seek which they had left unfinished at sunset the night before, and would undoubtedly leave unfinished when the sun went down again. There was no interregnum between their profound repose and ceaseless activity. They chased one another up and over the pillars, along the ridge of the station-roof, down the rain-pipe, up one side of a telegraph post, down the other, and twenty yards along the rails, when one suddenly remembered where he had left a nutshell, secured it, and for the next half-hour was engaged in eluding the red-hot pursuit of his mate. It is said a little exercise before breakfast is good for the appetite. What an appetite these squirrels must always have!

Then the dawn came, and "rosy-fingered Aurora" overspread the sky, till it was plain from the gold and scarlet in the east that sunrise was at hand. A blue-winged "roller" appeared and took up his perch on a telegraph wire, where, after clearing his throat and wiping his beak, he sang his short morning song, but broke off in the middle to give chase to a bee that came rashly near his watch-tower. His beautiful blue-and-green livery seemed to make him proud and overbearing, for he rushed to

attack any other bird, no matter what its size, which ventured within twenty yards of his post. The green-and-bronze *Merops* commenced to hawk, and the red-headed "coppersmith" set to work on his leafy anvil. About the last birds to put in an appearance, and not till the sun was well up, were the kites, but when they were sailing overhead it was a sign that all nature was awake again and the day's work begun. I, however, turned in, and snatched "forty winks" on a particularly hard bench in the waiting-room.

To many these fourteen hours' waiting might have proved extremely tedious, but I spent them pleasantly enough thus, and also in an excursion over the open sandy country round the station, together with writing and reading. Moreover, the arrival of each train, with its overflowing crowd of natives, was always interesting; and there were breakfast, tiffin, and dinner to be discussed, over which, not being an onward-going passenger, I was not bound to the regulation fifteen minutes. After lunch I was strolling about the platform, when a poor old, decrepit coolie woman appeared on the line, and came timidly forward with her eyes bent on

the ground, every now and then stooping to pick up something which she greedily ate. Wondering what this could be, I waited until she was close by, and then again saw her bend down, rub her fingers along the rails, and suck them. She was positively eating the train oil which had fallen from the axles of the carriages! When I thought of my own luncheon, with its pickled salmon and its carefully iced claret-cup, I was filled with shame and sorrow for her, and threw her a bright new rupee, which settled at her feet. She looked up and stared at me as wonder-struck, as though Vishnu the preserver had risen before her.

At last the long hot day was over, and 8.30 brought the mail train from Madras, steaming and snorting into Arconum. After the usual excitement, things settled down, and I found myself in sole possession of a comfortable carriage.

Waking next day early, it was to find we were flying through an open stony country, with rugged hills to the westward. I judged we were arrived at the Deccan, and should soon be in the native territory of Hyderabad, the largest and most powerful State which still

exists in the centre of our Empire. During the morning we passed many rocky mounds in the boundless plain, and nearly all of these were crowned with handsome forts and encircling walls, the ancient strongholds of the warlike Mahrattas. We thundered over the wide sandy bed of the Kistnah by a long wooden bridge at noon, and entering Hyderabad, saw great herds of goats and buffaloes "grazing" on bare plough lands.

In the afternoon we came into the cotton region, and all around were wide expanses of the cotton shrubs, growing in the rich black soil. We saw the huge bales of raw material being slowly drawn along blinding white roads by lazy cattle. The crops did not seem to have suffered so much as in the south, and the people were more finely made and muscular than any of our own. At one station a company of strangely attired wandering mummers climbed into the train, and I never saw ten handsomer men or more pleasing women since I landed in this country.

We thundered past many mud villages, almost all with the remains of an ancient wall round them, and lots of little white tombs with

doomed tops standing under trees—things never seen in the far south. The fan-palm (*Borassus flabelliformis*) had also given place to the shorter date-palm; and little grey pigeons, which I had not seen till then, flew up from the dry ground on either side and raced the train. We ordered every meal ahead of us by telegraph, and there ensued the usual scramble for places and "killing pace" for knife and fork during the fifteen minutes allowed; but it was all amusing. The early breakfast, with its coffee far too near boiling-point to be drunk, tiffin in the sultry mid-day, and dinner at Sholapoor, just on the borders of the Bombay Presidency, in the hot evening, with the punkahs flapping overhead, and the usual swarms of insects—too many even for me—especially of those who drowned themselves in our beer, and of the mosquitoes which stung us in the ankle or wrist just as our attention was engaged on the soup.

I was considerably impressed with the population of Hyderabad. They seemed beyond measure superior in type to the average peasant people of the south; the men much armed and given to swaggering, and the women bejewelled and girt with many and wonderfully

coloured robes. Of their ornaments, I was best pleased with the wide nose-ring fixed in one nostril, generally with a small bunch of pearls in a cluster at one side. A gold or gilt saucer-shaped ornament, worn on the roll of black hair at the back of the head, was also striking. But it is needless, however pleasant a task it would be, to describe all the new sights and changing scenes which the motley crowd at each station presented to my eyes: I must hurry on.

At daybreak the next morning, we had left the wide stony Hyderabad plains behind, and were passing through a rather better wooded country, till about 5 a.m. we pulled up at Poonah station. There had been a "burra tumasha" of some kind, and after my cup of hot coffee and biscuits, I walked up and down the platform, and thought I had never seen a neater or a better station than this. The offices were banked up with beautiful flowers, the whole place clean and trim; but, above all, the pillars were covered with a lovely white jasmine in full flower, making the morning air perfectly ambrosial.

Then on again, but only to Kirkee, a small

station though a big place—in history at least. Here we were detained two hours, owing to a stoppage on the line in front; and when this was set right, we commenced the descent of the Bhore Ghaut, the great drop which separates the Deccan from the Concan, or Bombay lowlands.

It was a mighty undertaking! When you commence the descent, you see far below you the paddy fields of the vast plain, looking smaller than squares on a chess-board, and then, with an engine sometimes actually backing in front, and two guard's-vans with their brakes hard on behind, you go slowly downwards. If the train were to become unmanageable, there would be no possible hope for any one. But it does not; and in half an hour the temperature of the air seems twenty degrees hotter, and you have done the "sixteen miles' incline," and are 1831 feet lower than where you took your morning coffee. You are all amongst the rice swamps again, with a mighty chain of mountains towering above. Bombay is now comparatively close at hand. At the next station, your tickets which have brought you 750 miles from Arconum, are taken, and your carriage is besieged by touts, who thrust the cards of their rival

hotels into your hands, and evince a lively interest as to where you are intending to stop. Then the train crosses a great sea-marsh by a long embankment, winds round a couple of hills, and finds itself amongst scattered houses, which grow thicker and thicker, until at last we are fairly in the beautiful city of Bombay, and pull up at the Boree Bunder station.

CHAPTER XIII.

BOMBAY AND POONAH.

I ESTABLISHED myself at the Esplanade Hotel, close to the harbour, and possessed myself of a room, one of the few vacant, at the very top of that monstrous pile. Though it was a considerable achievement in mountain climbing to reach it, carpeted stairs were such a novelty to me, that I rather enjoyed them; and, above all, there was a magnificent view over the broad blue harbour in the daytime, with innumerable white sails creeping about, and here and there, a big black steamer with the flag of her company at the mast-head. Again, at night the broad city, with its thousand twinkling lights, lay below me; and, after so long a spell of the jungles, it was absolutely delightful to lie with open blinds, and listen to the hum of that busy hive of human beings.

As it happened, my arrival befell just at the time when the sepoy troops were beginning to embark for Malta, and consequently Bombay was even more than usually lively. Here, in the hotel, Mars was very strongly represented, and the jingle of spurs and clattering of scabbards was heard on the staircase all day long. Indeed, the house was full of officers, many very young and fresh from England, but all now westward-bound in the line of great convoys which lay in the harbour, each with her number painted large on her bows. The wives, *in esse* and *in posse*, of the officers also numbered in strong force, and as each regiment embarked for an unknown service, many sadly dimmed eyes were to be seen round the breakfast table each day. Truly, war is worst for those who stay at home. I saw nearly every member of the expedition, as they trooped by under the balcony where I spent the morning, smoking and reading, and could only say that I hoped these Bombay troops would be as trustworthy in the hour of trial as they were smart on parade. Much always depends on the officers, for good officers make good men, and nothing could be more promising than the examples of the

former to be seen gathered together in the town.

It was both interesting and pleasant to watch the troops as they went streaming by, now a regiment of white helmets and scarlet coats of the line, and then a troop of cavalry on brown horses, with grey uniforms and blue turbans, carrying long lances with small red-and-white pennons at their points, making them look like a moving field of poppies. The Apollo Bunder, or pier, whence the men were conveyed to the transports, was a lively scene of excitement all day long.

In fact, I paid, altogether, a most pleasant flying visit to the beautiful city, favoured by delicious weather and entire freedom from fever, and instructed in my wandering by Maclean's excellent "Guide to Bombay," published at the *Bombay Gazette* office, which should be in the hands of every new arrival, as it is astounding how much one can miss in a big city like this if one wanders about without aim or object.

One morning was devoted to the New Crawford Market. Driving there in a very springy buggy, or sort of hooded dog-cart, I arrived just as the morning sales were commencing.

It was a most curious scene—the long and lofty building, with wide avenues of stalls piled up with strange fruits and flowers, and the motley crowds of natives from all parts jostling and crowding about the little counters on which each merchant sat among his goods. Even English ladies were to be seen making the household purchases before the best of the fruit was gone—an excellent example to their less energetic countrywomen—but protected from the struggling natives by butler-wallahs in bright uniforms, with crests embroidered on their tunics. Such a place as this must be a terrible blow to the observance of strict caste rules, for it is impossible to prevent contact of the closest between members of many sorts of religions and every colour of skin in the course of five minutes. Not many years ago, an orthodox Hindoo woman would have thrown away her dinner, even if only the shadow of a sahib had fallen on it; but here the Hindoo women were buying and selling, pushing and struggling, with equal indifference, among the brown-skinned coolies boasting only a pocket-handkerchief by way of clothing, and the white-clad British. Of fruit there was a great

variety: oranges from Nagpore, grapes from Ahmedabad, peaches from Bangalore; lovely strawberries, which would repay a voyage to India on purpose to eat them, from Mahabuleshwar; dates from the Persian Gulf. A medlar-like fruit, the chickoo, seemed very popular, and there was an abundant supply of fresh vegetables, mostly from Poonah and the inland ghauts.

Then there was the fresh meat market, not quite so pleasant as the division for fruit and flowers. One part of this was for mutton, where the Hindoos were busy; but beyond was a partition, on the far side of which was the beef for base, low-caste natives and cow-eating sahibs,—"abomination of desolation" to all good Brahmans. Two distinct sets of coolies, differing widely from each other in religion, were employed in moving the two kinds of meats. In the fish market, however, all met again peacefully, and the stall-keepers shouted out the prices at the top of their voices, and sold fish of many colours and sorts to natives and Europeans equally. One little girl followed me about with a huge specimen resembling a codfish, as big as herself, which she wanted me

to buy; but I had to decline it emphatically, to her manifest surprise and sorrow. Then I sauntered across a pleasant green garden with a fountain, to the poultry market, where hundreds of unfortunate fowls, all doomed to die, were awaiting their fate along with ducks, and amongst cages of parrots, mynas, love-birds, etc., and sundry foxes, wild cats, and porcupines, destined, probably, to be exported to England as curiosities.

On another occasion the silk and cotton bazaar was visited, but seemed a little disappointing to me on account of the prevalence of cheap and poor Manchester goods, much of which it did not require the eye of an expert to see was half glaze. In fact, if our countrymen are not careful, they will kill the goose that lays the golden egg, and close this market to their merchandise. But the street where the workers in tin were located was much more interesting, and in the early morning, the bright sun overhead shining down on a long double row of open shops, all heaped up with bright metal ware, was "quite too gay," as the Americans would say. It struck me as an excellent arrangement to have all the shops of one

trade together, for when you want a thing you know exactly where to look for it, and have a wide choice. Coming out of this neighbourhood, I passed the shops of some Parsee tailors, who, when they saw me, sprang up on their counters, and waving all sorts of garments above the heads of the crowd, called out, "Hi! sahib, stop! this very good pair of trousers only two rupee," and so on; but I did not stop, and left them still dancing and shouting excitedly.

Then one charming day was spent in driving about Malabar Hill and presenting numerous letters of introduction to the residents on that pleasant ridge. During this excursion the Parsee "Towers of Silence" were visited, where the fire-worshippers place their dead on iron gratings, and leave them to the beaks and claws of the kites and vultures. They are like nothing so much as whitewashed martello towers, and the driver of my buggy, an intelligent native, asked my opinion as to the superiority of the various modes of disposing of the dead. "Here, sahib," he said, "the Parsee put his dead people to feed the birds; yonder is the English burying-place, with the sahibs and

mem-sahibs in holes in the ground; and my people burn dead men. Which does the sahib think best?" I said there was no doubt burning was by far the best; and burying the ugliest and stupidest form of disposing of the departed that had ever been practised by a nation which called itself civilized. This same driver on another occasion gave me his views on the Eastern question. He said, "I am a poor man, sahib, but every day I spend two annas on a newspaper and read about the Russee. I know all about the fighting, and how the good Queen spread out her hands and said, 'Stop,' when the Russees were going to kill all the Turkees, and that all the soldiers here are going to help fight for the Sultan." In fact, it was plain he regarded the Kaiser-i-Hind as a sort of goddess with a ring in her nose, whose frown was to be feared by kings, and whose anger must prove sudden death, even to the mightiest of earth.

At sunset every night the Parsees are to be seen standing in a long line on the beach of the inner bay, repeating prayers out of strange little books in their hands, and salaaming and bowing to the great crimson orb, as he slowly

sinks down into the sea and leaves the world to darkness. The women do not seem to pray, but stand higher up the beach, behind the men and boys; and it is a strange sight to watch the two rows, the first just where the small waves are breaking on the sandy margin, all intent upon the great sun-god, and the second row, of women and girls in wonderfully coloured garments of pinks, greens, and yellows, observing and attending the others. The Parsees are, in fact, the most interesting race about Bombay. Their schools are very excellent; their clothing, all but the hat, highly rational and picturesque; and their bazaar most curious, though somewhat dirty—many of their houses being adorned with marvellously carved pillars and beams. Next to the English, they are the most prosperous and powerful class; and this was curiously instanced to me when, being one night at a large circus on the maidân, I noticed that all the eight-anna seats, on one side of the building, were taken up by the dark-robed Parsee men, while the cheaper seats, on the other side, were occupied by white-clad Hindoos.

In brief, I made the most of my time, and

saw everything that was to be seen at that season; but my holiday came all too soon to an end, and I was forced, very reluctantly, to pack up for a return to the jungle. All the pleasures of civilized life had to be left behind again. No more the early morning plunge, when there was a regular scramble amongst the bachelors on the top story for first use of the bath-rooms, and those who had to wait stood about in bathing-costume, listening to the refreshing splashing of the more fortunate! No more the delightful breakfast in the big saloon of the hotel, where a couple of hundred Englishmen were collected together, and half as many ladies, the smartly dressed servants rushing about and attending to their masters' wants and icing their wine—all drink wine or beer for breakfast in Bombay—the pomfrets, the curries, and all the other culinary delights! No more, after breakfast, the long lounge and smoke in the verandah, with the gay crowds below, the tossing sea of white umbrellas at mid-day—even the horses wore a sort of pith helmet—and, beyond, the great blue harbour and numerous islands and the broad sea, over which your thoughts might flit homewards.

Not again, if I were thirsty, could I clap my hands and call out "Boy;" whereupon, almost as soon as my wish was framed, a "peg" arrived on a silver tray, with a consoling lump of ice bobbing about in it! "Pegs" are bad morally if taken immoderately, but, physically and in reason, they are undoubtedly refreshing. I must forswear the jolly tiffin—an informal meal, during which some of us talked shop, and discussed the price of yarns and cotton or the embarking of the last regiment, and some of us flirted with our neighbours, not seriously eating, until our horses or buggies stood at the door, and we started on fresh explorations, or whatever our business might be. Never again, for a year, what the Americans call a "seventy-five cent dinner" at 6.30, and then the delightful evening spent in the verandah or strolling about the town, till the day finished up with a game of billiards. The jungle called me back to its fever-mists and miserable gangs of semi-savages. Think sometimes, my countrymen, as you sip your coffee, of the planter who grows it, and spare a sigh for his lonely lot!

The very last hour of my stay at Bombay having come, I was once more in the train

and bound southward, with the intention, however, of breaking the journey by a short stay and inspection of Poonah.

The flat marshy land was crossed, and a picturesque ruin noticed standing by a broad arm of the sea; and then Kampoolie was reached and the ascent of the Bhore Ghaut commenced. I have said something of this before, but it seems more wonderful every time it is approached. I was lost in admiration of the engineering skill which could survey the course of the line and determine its practicability. Once surveyed, the construction of the railway became, of course, only a matter of labour and sufficient money. After passing along the face of precipices, tunnelling mountains, and crossing rocky chasms by fragile-seeming bridges, the reversing station is reached, and, looking out of the carriage-window, the view becomes truly grand. The wild, rugged Mahratta hills all around, crowned here and there with the ruins of old forts, are so scarped and battlemented, it is difficult to say whether the masses of ramparts on each eminence are Nature's or man's handiwork. All these hills are clothed with a scanty growth of

the jujuba tree—the Mahratta name of which, Bhor, gives its name to the ghaut—at this season withered and dry. The train stops on a narrow ridge of land, up to which it has arduously climbed; and it seems lucky it does stop, for on both sides there are mighty chasms, with forest-clad sides and foaming torrents at the bottom, and the engine has pulled up within a few feet of a flimsy wooden barricade, beyond which there opens a drop, and apparently nothing exists to prevent any one falling right over into the Bombay paddy fields, a thousand or more feet below. But a fresh engine is put on to what was the rear of the train, and we start off again. Now our faces are towards Bombay, and we catch beautiful glimpses of the blue water and fishing junks, and the widespread lowland country coming up to the very foot of the ghauts which we are climbing, while the track of the line we have passed over can be just made out below us, winding threadlike along the mountain-side, now disappearing and now crossing a tall viaduct or slender bridge. All this time we are conscious that the existence of every one in the train depends on the strength of the coup-

lings of the engine. If they were to break—and the strain on them is fearfully severe—we should begin to run slowly backward; and fortunate would be those who jumped out then, for the pace would increase with every yard, there would be a wild rush, a few minutes of desperate suspense, and then the barrier below would be reached, and, with a crash, the train would go through it and be hurled down into the valley with all its living load.

The Deccan was reached at sunset, and by the time the train had arrived at Poonah Station, "night's drowsy-flighted steeds" had enveloped everything in darkness. Entrusting myself and baggage to a very comfortable omnibus, I was soon at the Napier Hotel—about the best in the town, but, as I found, rather empty at this time; so I turned in early, and, to tell the truth, made the acquaintance of the Poonah mosquitoes rather too intimately, and learned to respect the keenness of their lancets.

Up before the sun the next morning, I went for a long walk through the town; but though I was here eighteen years ago—at that time a very small chokra—I could remember nothing, though every now and then, in passing some

strange street or curious sight, a sort of dim *revenant* of memory would pass through my mind; but, in truth, everything was new to me, excepting such similar experience as the sights of Bombay had afforded. But Poonah is rather more classical than Bombay, the latter town being as much Anglicized as a native city can be. While up here we are in the heart of the wide and famous Mahratta country, and when once the English "lines" are passed, the wanderer finds himself in truly native quarters. Doubtless most of my readers know what they are like, so I will only say there is the same motley crowd; the same double row of open stalls with the matting shutters propped up in front to keep some of the sun from the sleepy-looking merchants who squat cross-legged on their own counters; the same superabundance of small brown children rolling over each other in the hot dust, and quarrelling with the dogs for playthings and slices of melons; the usual swarm of crows—black, lawless birds, with only one idea in the world, to get some breakfast, as much and as soon as possible—and far overhead the ubiquitous kites and vultures, sailing about in the bright mid air.

A visit of fraternal affection was paid to the English cemetery, a strikingly pretty place, cool and green, between two ridges of the brown maidân—where a brother lay buried; and some calls were made in the military "lines," but only to learn that every one had flown to Mahabuleshwar and the other hills—for Poonah in May is a name of dread to the old Indian. Indeed, I found the heat prodigious, worse than anything I had ever experienced before, and pith helmet with white umbrella were but a poor fence against it when the sun stood at its highest and almost directly overhead.

This first day at Poonah being Sunday, my departure was put off until the morrow; and in the evening, while returning to my hotel from a long stroll, I saw and entered a handsome church, where service was just beginning, and speedily found myself seated in a pew, with a black-robed nun on either side, who were good enough to let me look over their books in turn. Feeling I had not been in such good company for a long time, I hope my devotions were the more profound.

If trains on the Madras and Bombay line are convenient when once you are in them, they are

certainly not numerous, and when I came to make inquiries next day, it was to find the first train southward would start late in the evening; so another long hot day had to be spent here, and then at last I was able to pay my bill and drive down to the station with pleasant remembrances of Poonah, though modified by the strength of the sun and the ferocity of its mosquitoes.

Waking from a comfortable night's sleep, rolled in a rug, on the seats of the carriage, which I alone occupied, it was to find we were again flying through the Deccan, and in the land of fort-crowned hills, with occasional broad shallow jheels, or small lakes, where a good many water-birds were to be seen.

We breakfasted at Shahabad, the junction for Hyderabad, the Nizam's city, and then I entered a fresh carriage with several other English, and we were once more whirling southward.

But the exertions and exposures at Poonah had been too much for me, or perhaps I had drawn rather heavily on my diminished physical strength at Bombay, considering it was the hot season. About mid-day my head began to ache frightfully. I knew what that portended,

and five minutes afterwards I was in the cold stage of a sharp attack of fever. I held out as long as might be without letting any one see I was ill. But at last the shivering which shook me from head to foot became irrepressible. My fellow-passengers saw it, and, apparently thinking I had some infectious disorder, got out at the next place of stoppage and told the station-master. He happened to be a worthy old Scotchman, and came at once to the carriage; when, putting his hand on my shoulder, he said very kindly, "What's the matter with you, my boy?" I told him I was "in for fever," and only wanted to be left alone; so for the next hundred miles I shivered and grew red-hot alternately. There was only one Englishman with me, a gentleman whose name is unknown to me, but to whom I owe a debt of gratitude; for when he perceived what was the matter, he moved into my carriage and took the greatest care of me. When the hot stage of the fever came on, I was able to form some idea of what the Inferno of Dante was like. My head ached with the tumultuous anguish which only fever brings, and there was the ceaseless rattle and jolting of the train to make it worse,

while the least light offended my eyes, and there was the glare of the wide sandy plains all round. My blood was on its own account at boiling heat, and overhead the Indian sun was blistering the paint and making the varnish on the woodwork bubble, but the finishing touch seemed furnished by the clouds of hot white dust which filled the carriage and rendered my consuming thirst wellnigh unsupportable. This may be tedious reading; it certainly was a tedious experience, but it came to an end at last. The generous Englishman had left me; I had fallen into the stupor which always follows these attacks, and must have been asleep for a long time; for when an unusual noise aroused me, I started up and staggered to my feet, limp, weak, and tired, but well again, and, looking out of the open window, saw we were crossing a river by a mighty wooden bridge.

It was the sacred Kistnah, which rises in the Western Ghauts and flows right across India to the Bay of Bengal. Sometimes a mighty flood, at this season there was only left of it a wide, sandy bed, a mile broad, and as smooth as sand could be; while in the very centre, at an equal distance from either bank, all that the dry

season had spared of the current of the great river was a single meandering thread of silver water, winding hither and thither under a bright starlit sky and a young crescent moon (perhaps the most beautiful object in nature) overhead.

Then I snatched some more broken sleep; took some tea and biscuits at a wayside station, and got through a long night's travelling, until, when another dawn came, we were among the fan-palms of the southern plains, and a guard, looking into the carriage, asked if the sahib would wish to breakfast at Madras, as we should be there in half an hour.

One's impressions of a place depend to a very great extent upon the condition of one's digestion and other physical causes. One man will say he thinks a place very ugly, but confess that his hotel bill was too heavy; it is the bill that is to blame and not the place, for another traveller, coming the next day, may protest it is the loveliest place he ever saw. Only in the multitude of counsellors is there wisdom. So when I say I stayed at Madras three days, had fever twice in that short time, and couldn't sleep for the mosquitoes, so that I thought the

town a most detestable place, built on a vile sea sand-bank which ought never to have been inhabited, my gentle readers must take such petulant evidence for what it is worth. The fourth day found me once more in the train, bound westward for Palghaut. There was the usual dinner at Arconum, in the middle of which the old commissioner, a well-known fixture of that place, swung the door open all too soon, and said, "Gentlemen and ladies, the train is now ready." We breakfasted at Coimbatore, and at mid-day I was once more standing alone on the Palghaut platform, amongst my far-travelled belongings.

My holiday not having quite come to an end, and hardly knowing what else to do with myself, I determined to get up to the jungles at once, and spend a few days at F——'s bungalow, above the fever range; so, after tiffin at the "travellers' bungalow" and a good deal of delay in obtaining a bandy, a start was made at 6 p.m.

This was not the same bandy in which I came down, but, from my subsequent experience, I began to think that bandy travelling is inevitably attended with an uncomfortable adventure of some sort.

Scarcely had we got so far from the town as to make it useless to turn back, when the sky became overcast, and it was obvious we were in for a monsoon storm, which in another ten minutes duly began. The sky grew black as pitch, and the rain descended in torrents and found its way through the bamboo matting overhead without any difficulty. It was so dark, as we plodded slowly along, that I could only just make out the outlines of the white bullocks in front, while the dusky form of the native driver was quite swallowed up, although he had deserted his usual uncomfortable perch on the pole and backed into the bandy to try and get some shelter. In this way we wandered along all the early part of the night, jolting fearfully, and getting our wheels first into one rut and then into another, every now and then running into the bank or a fig tree, and going elsewhere, goodness only knows whither. At midnight the storm seemed at its worst, and the thunder and lightning raged incessant, so that I was wet through and profoundly uncomfortable. While wondering how it would end, suddenly a flash of lightning illuminated the whole district; I say a flash, but it seemed as if the

whole sky split open from east to west, and a river of blue flame poured forth. For one moment everything leapt into view. The wide lonely rice land all around, with miles of watery swamps; the black outlines of the grove of fig trees in which we were; the two white bullocks with their gleaming wet hides; the cowering driver, and the road cut up with gurgling streamlets—all were as visible as though it were mid-day for an instant, and then everything vanished in profoundest darkness, and the thunder broke out directly overhead with as wild and awful a sound as the lightning had been a terrible sight.

To add to the unpleasantness of the situation, the driver whined out that he had lost the road—did the sahib know where they were? But the sahib hadn't an idea, so ordered the man to go on straight ahead, in the hope of finding some village where shelter might be obtained. It must have been nearly one o'clock when the dim outlines of a hut was made out at the roadside, and, pulling up in front, I jumped down and went to get our "bearings" from the owners. But all was dark and silent. Groping my way to the door, I was just entering when

there was heard a most unearthly hoot, I saw the gleaming of two pale green eyes, and some big bird—an owl, probably, that had been sheltering from the storm—dashed out into the dark night. Judging from this the place was empty, I walked inside, but before I had gone many feet, tripped over something heavy on the ground, which, from the feel and particularly "high" odour, I judged must be a coolie; so I stirred him up again with the toe of my boot, and called out to him to wake; but he never moved. Thinking this strange, a wisp of rice straw from the bandy was lighted, and by that uncertain torch, held above my head, I made out the bare mud walls, the palm-leaf roof, and mud floor of the deserted hut, and at my feet a bundle of dreadful rags, wrapt round the thin form of a coolie. Poor fellow! it will be a long time before he wakes again; for when I turned him over to see why he slept so soundly, I saw he was dead—dead of starvation, and had crept in here, lonely and forgotten, to finish his life. While I looked at him the straw went out, and we were in darkness again, with the certainty of having to stay here for the present. The bandy man was crouched under the cart, with

all his clothing round his head—the usual way in which a native keeps himself warm—and for a time I tried walking up and down under the eaves of the hut, and watching the moon struggling with the watery rear-guards of the army of clouds; but, being dreadfully sleepy I made up my mind that dead man, or no dead man, I would lie down inside, so entered the hut, pushed the poor old coolie into the most remote corner, and, wrapping myself in a rug, with a revolver conveniently at hand in my belt (for my departed friend against the opposite wall was odoriferous enough to attract all the jackals in the neighbourhood), I stretched myself on the bare floor, and was soon sleeping delightfully, with pleasant dreams flitting through my mind.

Needless to say, we did not linger long in these quarters, but with the first pink streaks of the fresh welcome dawn we "harnessed to" and followed the road to the southward, keeping the lightest parts of the sky on our left. This, by the way, was my birthday, but I was almost forgetting it myself until it suddenly occurred to me as an odd sort of celebration.

Presently we fell in with some landmarks

which the bandy-wallah knew, and so bore gaily up for Wallanghay, while the sun dried my wet clothes, and things looked much more cheerful than they had appeared last night. Finally, about 10 a.m., the Vladimir bungalow was reached; and after a substantial breakfast, for I had eaten scarcely anything since the morning before, I laid down for a rest on the shaky charpoy which formed almost the only article of furniture in the widow's guest-room.

The evening was spent in company with D——, Cecil H——, S——, and L——, who were all bound for Palghaut, to attend the funeral of an old Englishman who had died there the day before. Poor L—— was a mere scarecrow of skin and bones, after a month's fever, and scarcely able to stand, while the others were all more or less shaky and hollow-eyed. They described the malaria up above as fearful. Nevertheless we spent a pleasant evening, seated round the rickety table in the little bungalow, drinking bottled beer and punch out of cracked cups and saucers, while the widow and her little daughter trotted backwards and forwards in the moonlight outside, with their bangles tinkling and their slim forms wrapped in white

sarees, attending to our wants, until the time came for the others to start northward. Then, with a lot of "good-nights," they tumbled into the line of bandies standing in the road, and went off down the deserted native street, leaving me to my meditations—not very pleasant ones, perhaps, as I foresaw a certainty of sickness in store for me, and lately the fever had considerably undermined my strength. But the night was beautiful, and it was impossible to be gloomy under such a lovely sky. High overhead the moon soared, shining amid countless stars, as big and bright as they only are in the tropics; and, descending to our tiny earth, the little village was asleep from one end to the other. Even the bananas round each compound hung down their broad leaves, and for once had ceased fluttering, for there stirred not a breath of air, and the fields of tall green rice stretching away to the foot of the forest-clad Annamullies were still and deserted by every sign of life except the fireflies. Of these there flickered countless myriads; if the rice had seeded and every grain grown luminous with pale green fire, the sight would not have been more wonderful. It was like nothing so much as

the phosphorescence to be seen on a calm night at sea, and I smoked my long cheroot, watching the oscillating swarms of little lamp-lighters, and thinking how much a man may bear without losing heart or the enjoyment of life.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEATH AND BRIGHT LIFE.

ONCE more in harness and at the hard grind which usually falls to the lot of the coffee planter in new districts, I was now entering on all the discomforts of my second wet monsoon.

The coffee had just finished flowering on the older estates, and it was a fine sight while it lasted. I have said that the trees are about three or four feet high, and densely covered with broad, glossy, dark green leaves, very much like those of the orange. From the junction of each of these leaves with the twig bursts forth a great cluster of ten or twelve blossoms, also very closely resembling the orange flower in colour and form; yet not, alas! in odour. The former is delightful, but the latter is faint and sickly; the coolies

declare the scent gives them fever, and those that had to carry my messages through the flowering estates begged double pay, as though it were a service of danger. The scent is undoubtedly unpleasant, though the sight of a wide extent of clearing covered with a carpet of green leaves and a wealth of snow-white blossoms is very pleasing, and reminds one of the country at home when the hawthorn hedges are in full bloom.

The malaria at that time was wonderfully bad, worse than anything I had known before. Every time the sun came up, and when he went down again, the heavy fever mist was drawn out of its lurking-places amongst the decayed vegetation, and rolled over the ground in bluish-grey sheets. All day long it lay in the deep glens and river hollows, and became so dense as to be perfectly nauseous to breathe. Once, while crossing the jungle, I came to the steep banks of a reedy nullah, and descended to wade across; but no sooner was I down into the fog than my head swam, my breathing grew painful, and my throat rough and dry, so that I was glad to scramble back before my senses left me, as they were rapidly doing. In

this same nullah, hanging from the trees overhead, was a wonderful creeper, which is rare in these jungles. Its leaves, as usual, were so high up as to be an undistinguishable green mass, but the stem, as thick as a man's arm, was covered with big grey knobs, all rough and thorny. These creepers are very useful to the monkeys, who employ them as though they were ropes, and swarm up them in a most extraordinary manner.

Of course this weather affected the coolies even more than the Englishmen, and my sick list every evening was a heavy one, while, as D—— was very unwell himself on Bungalow Hill, and R—— away collecting coolies in Madura (though we had five hundred already), I rapidly acquired some fresh practical medical skill in the diseases most common on the estate. Then the "lines" were in a vile condition, and we were so hard at work road-making and planting, that we could spare no time to construct fresh ones. The natural result was that small-pox and cholera soon appeared. Very few of the coolies were vaccinated, and we had no means of performing it for them, so we jogged along as well as we could.

One morning, while sitting at breakfast, I heard a tinkle of bangles in the porch, and, getting up, found a coolie girl—a very comely girl as coolies go—of about seventeen or eighteen, kneeling on the ground. When she saw me, she threw herself down full length, and cried out something in Tamil, which was quite unintelligible. Calling my "boy," I asked what she wanted, whereon she lifted her head a few inches from the ground, and again spoke in her own language. "Sahib," said the boy, translating with his usual total disregard of genders, "this girl here he say he has had small-pox very bad. He's too sick, too thin to do any more work, and has got no food. He say no one will help him but the sahib, and if he doesn't get food, he is going to sit on the sahib's doorstep and die." And truly the poor girl was very thin and haggard, and the few glass bangles on her arms slipped up and down them as though they were sticks. She, however, was more in need of food than medicine; so, by way of commencement, I made a big basin of bread and milk, and gave her an empty biscuit-box to sit on while she consumed it—a process which took her very little time.

Subsequently placing her in my private relief camp, she rapidly picked up strength, and was at work again two weeks afterwards.

The cholera was even more serious, and many coolies died of it, though it did not spread rapidly, but contented itself with a few victims each week. The stables, a few yards from my hut, furnished the hospital, and I am bound to say "the stoker" took the greatest interest in the patients, who—considerately enough—either died or got better in a very few days, and so made room for more. He borrowed all my chatties to cook them conjee in—needless to say, I never asked for the chatties back—and even told my servant to look after them. This was too much for that poor wretch, and so one night, after placing my dinner on the table, he stood in front of me, shuffling about with his feet, his face a bluish tint, until, asking him what was the matter, he said he was frightened of the cholera. He had seen two men screw themselves up into knots and die that afternoon, and he wished to start for the lowlands the next morning, where his wife and child were. Not a very pleasant prospect for me to have

to cook for myself after each day's hard work, but I saw he was just in the right way to get cholera if he stayed, so I told him he might go for a week, and the next morning he went.

When I came back from work that day at noon and flung myself into an armchair, forgetting for a moment the state of affairs, I called out "Boy, breakfast quickly!" but there was no answer, and the misery of my position dawned upon me. Carlyle has said the great distinction between man and beasts is that the former only uses implements; and, allowing this, I should add that the chief distinction between savages and the civilized was that the latter employed others to cook for them. Certainly I never felt so barbarous as I did that morning, when I crouched in the grubby little hut that served as a kitchen, blowing hard to get the fire to light, and half choked with the dense wood smoke, which enveloped me and made my originally white clothes terribly black. But, somehow or other, I cooked a chop in great discomfort by running a stick through it and twisting it over the fire, and then bolted to the hut with it and ate it, all booted and unwashed as I was; after which some water was boiled

in an empty beef tin and a rough brew of tea made.

I was extremely uncomfortable that week, and learned by bitter experience how much of one's enjoyment depends on the cook. The breakfasts were not so bad, for there was at least enough light then for my operations; but cooking the dinner in the dusk after a long day's toil, and getting sickened with the smoke, and, after all, having to be contented with a little dirty, underdone meat, was decidedly tiresome, while on top of it all the fever came punctually every now and then.

The coolie graves in the jungle near by were at this time growing terribly numerous; there were more already than we had opened of acres, probably, and the number increased daily, but even they did not represent the complete total of deaths, as I was sometimes only too well aware. For instance, a coolie woman died, and I ordered her to be buried in the jungle by two of her kinsmen, and paid them the usual two rupees to do it. But they had a mind to save themselves trouble, and so took her down to the Manalora stream, when there happened to be a freshet in it, and threw her in. She floated

a little way, but was caught on the limb of a tree, and then the river sank into a single thread of water. About two weeks afterwards, I was walking up the nearly dry nullah bed, when my olfactory nerves told me there was something wrong, and going a little further I found out the cause—it was the body of the poor coolie woman still hanging to the branch! Then, again, many of the graves were made shockingly shallow, and the wild dogs and wolves tore them open and partly disinterred the inmates. In fact, I saw sights which will not bear describing; and, pretty well hardened as I became, my breakfast was often left untasted, and, with gun on my shoulder, I wandered away to the open grass hills, to freshen myself up by a little sweet air and undefiled nature, after some such dreadful sights and experiences.

But to turn to pleasanter subjects. This was the season for the entomologist. It was a sort of border time between the dry and wet monsoons, and the Lepidoptera of the former and the Coleoptera of the second were in almost equal abundance. My collections grew rapidly whenever I was fortunate enough to get a

couple of hours' holiday, and amounted to some two thousand beetles and a couple of hundred butterflies, captured on odd occasions. On a single occasion I secured six varieties of *Bacteria trophinus*, or walking-stick insects, in half an hour, of most wonderful forms and shapes —some so like dried twigs that it was impossible at first to recognize them, and others so accurately resembling fresh green leaves that they would have been safe from my search, had I not sent them tumbling into an open umbrella beneath the bush in which they lodged by a few vigorous strokes with a stick. These insects seem to find their curious vegetable appearance useful in two ways. Firstly, it protects them from their foes amongst the birds; and, secondly, enables them better to obtain their food by surprise. Indeed, one of the most noticeable points in the insect world of the jungles was the way in which each small creature was protected by nature from its foes in some ingenious manner. The instances of this which I observed were wellnigh innumerable, and would fill a long chapter. Thus, when I have been searching under the bark of dead trees, it has been very observable that all the

beetles harbouring there, and most of the other insects, have let themselves fall immediately they have felt the disturbance, and have become lost amongst the long herbage below. The success of this *ruse* when they are attacked by their chief foe, the woodpecker, is obvious. Many species of Heteroptera are so strongly scented, that doubtless no bird of any delicacy would think for a moment of eating them. One large brown specimen scented my hand with an odour of bitter almonds for several days, and another had a wonderfully strong smell of musk about it. Besides these scents, they are ungainly looking things, with spikes and thorns on the thorax, enough to make a bird's throat feel rough even to look at them. Another little beetle, one of the *Phytophagæ*, though its "christian" name is unknown to me, lived on the leaves of a small jungle shrub, in close companionship with a gaily striped yellow-and-black caterpillar. The beetle was steel-blue, and about the size of a pea, but a most curious thing was the trust it placed in its strange associates as watchmen. "A little more than kin and less than kind" does not apply here, for the caterpillars are less than kith and more

than kind. Several times I have approached one of these bushes, but no sooner have I shown myself to one of the caterpillars than it has left off feeding, thrown itself back on its rear claspers, and violently swung its body from side to side. At this strange movement, which might alone repel a bird, a gentle vibration has been communicated to the neighbouring twigs and leaves, and the blind-looking beetles have hastily let themselves drop to the ground, where they are quite safe; while, after passing the signal rapidly round the bush, so that every twig at last was in a tremble, the caterpillars would each take a turn round the nearest belaying-pin, and let themselves down after their strange associates by a thousand silken threads.

A much larger beetle, of a grey colour with a few orange spots, known to science as *Batocera rubus*, had the curious habit of squeaking loudly when touched, and doubtless this afforded it protection from some of its enemies. Now, the first time I caught a specimen of this beetle the squeaking puzzled me, since no insect has the power of making any sound from its throat and mouth, as vertebrate animals do. Every noise coming from an insect rises in its

exterior parts—from its wings, its legs, or, as in the cicada, from drums or threads which it causes to vibrate; but none of these would explain the sound arising from my beetle. So I took him home and investigated. He squeaked most strangely all the time, moving his head backward and forwards and waving his antennæ. This gave me a clue; and I dipped a small feather in oil, and passed it lightly round the junction of the head and thorax, and in a moment all sounds ceased, though the insect still continued his movements, and it was plain the sound had been caused by friction of his head and neck.

Then there is the mighty *Spirosireptes cinctatus*, as long as a man's hand, and belonging to the same family as the common English millipede, but of giant proportions, and, when touched, giving out from every ring of its body a thick yellow fluid, equally unpleasant to sight and smell, though I never found it to cause any physical pain, as is sometimes supposed. Another of these strange jungle creatures bears much resemblance to an English woodlouse, but when rolled up, as it always is when anything approaches, it equals in size a hen's egg;

and if it happens to be on a fallen tree-trunk or on sloping ground, it rolls away, and it is ten to one if it can be caught.

Among the Lepidoptera there does not seem to be quite so much mimicry, though there exists a brown butterfly which flits amongst the low herbage, and on being alarmed shuts its upper wings and lets them lie under the lower pair, then becoming so exactly like a dead leaf, that even when captured and lying on white paper, it is a matter of considerable difficulty to say whether it be insect or vegetable. But, as a rule, Nature has endowed this order with bright wings and great powers of flight to escape their enemies. In general, they flit along singly in the sunny glades, and along the borders of the clearings, but occasionally I have come across marvellous companies of these bright insects. On one occasion, in the hot weather, when the streams were at their smallest, and everything lay dry and hot under the fierce sun, while all the trees and plants sagged down their leaves for want of moisture, I came upon a quiet nullah meandering through the jungle. The bed, by chance, just there was broad and sandy, and the stream a single

thread that seemed every moment in danger of vanishing. But to my astonished eyes the whole place appeared a garden of flowers of a thousand colours, and crowded so close by the water that the sand could scarcely be seen. I looked and looked again, and then stepped down to observe the parterre closer; but as I did so these animated blossoms sprang into the air in a huge cloud, and the truth was plain that they were a countless host of thirsty butterflies, collected from the forest all round to drink at this thread of liquid. The sight was wonderful as they wheeled round and round amongst the hanging creepers, and enough, in itself, to delight any naturalist—hundreds of varieties and tens of thousands of specimens, all intertwining in mazy gambols; every size and shape and colour was there, and as they flew backwards and forwards in the sunlight, with their wings shining and flashing, it was like a shower of jewels. I had often seen a few drinking before, but never such a mighty concourse. Perhaps the popularity of the stream was owing to the ease with which the flat sandy bed enabled them to come at the water.

Some may say that there is not much coffee planting in all this, but the truth is on an estate the work remains very much the same for the first three seasons. It has been mentioned how we planted out the young coffee shrubs, during the previous monsoon, first into baskets, and then into the square holes in the already felled and burnt clearings where they were to continue; and now again we were hard at work at the same thing, *i.e.* planting up the new enclosures made during the hot weather.

Some of our trees, however, in the oldest clearing were now nearly full-sized, and had even made a few attempts at flowering, but of course there was no crop worth picking; yet as they grew it became necessary to remove all shoots and suckers likely to interfere with the uniform growth of the plant, and this was done by small parties of our most trustworthy coolies, armed with short curved knives—the chief portions to be cut away being all suckers coming up from the ground round the chief stem, and any secondary "ascending axis" which would tend to make the centre of the bush too thick; for the great thing to

aim at is to have a neat round tree, nicely filling the space of ground allotted to it, and with the branches so disposed as to let each get a fair supply of air and light. This was our idea; but on F——'s estate and another the bushes were under "shade," *i.e.* a few of the forest trees, here and there, had been left standing, and protected the plants from the direct glare of the sun. Of course, on these estates the clearings were never burnt, as the fire would have destroyed the shade trees; but instead, the forest was felled, and the lighter material carried away to the borders by hand labour—a long process, which, however, is said to leave the valuable top soil of vegetable *débris* uninjured; though against this we thought that that same *débris* harboured a world of insects hurtful to the coffee plants, which a good "burn" would kill, and also promoted the dreaded leaf disease so common in Ceylon. But I do not pretend, with my short experience, to say which may be the best way, though since coffee in its wild state grows in the deep jungle, it seems natural that a certain amount of shade should be good for it. Let those interested look the subject up in some

of the numerous technical works on coffee planting, such as Spon's "Tropical Agriculture," or "The Experiences of a Coffee Planter in the Jungles of Mysore," by R. H. Elliot. The latter is an excellent book, containing a vast amount of good advice, and should be in the outfit of every coffee planter, as it was in mine.

CHAPTER XV.

ROAD-MAKING.

ROAD-MAKING now came also into full swing again, and most of my time was taken up in carrying on the new ghaut road, which during the hot weather had been at a standstill, past the borders of the next estate, through it and all the others, to the head of the ghaut. This, of course, was hard work both for the men and myself, as we now had a long walk in the early morning before we reached work, and a long trudge back in the evening. It was also feverish, as we kept close along the side of the Manalora stream, in order to make the road as level as might be, and the malaria which rose as we worked was often sickening. It proved, however, interesting, as my bill-men broke into untrodden nooks and corners of the virgin woods at every fresh spell of work; and we

were in very gamey parts too, though the noise of the axes and choppers frightened every wild thing away as we advanced. One day we broke full into a tiger's lair—a smooth, hard hollow at the foot of a shady tree, littered all about with bones and shreds of flesh and hair, amongst which there were some relics astonishingly like human ones. Too surely they may have been such, for not long ago one of our planters rode up the ghaut late at night, and at the top, hearing a woman moaning, he dismounted, and found it was an old coolie too sick to move. He did all he could; he gave her some water from the nearest stream in his helmet, and the next morning sent some of his men to fetch her in, but she was gone, and from the marks round about it was plain a tiger had carried her off. As for the sambour and bison tracks, they were so numerous that when I went half a mile ahead and set a trace with a few men, the main body, who followed behind with mamooties and spades, often turned off to the right or left, and took their work up one of these bypaths, under the impression that I had just made it. To show how numerous the game was, and what good

sport might be had by any one who could spare sufficient time, I may say that going to work one morning over the fresh, smooth earth of yesterday's road, there, all newly stamped in the same narrow passage, were a tiger cub's footmarks as big as saucers, the hoof-marks of a full-grown bison sunk deep into the soil, and also those of a sambour and a jungle sheep. All these various animals must have come down to examine our operations during the few hours of darkness. But this abundance of game was of no use to hard-working planters like ourselves, for a shot is only to be had late in the evening or early in the morning, and our exertions during the day left us little inclination for that sort of thing. L—— and I did, indeed, sit up all one night in the jungle, on a rough framework of boughs, by a stream where deer often came to drink, but L—— smoked so much bird's-eye to keep the fever mists away, that probably the animals scented us half a mile off. Certainly nothing came near us, and we got horribly bitten by mosquitoes, and were so very bad-tempered next day that we gave it up in disgust, and came to the conclusion that little is to be done in the

shooting way until an estate is several years old, or unless one likes to devote the few and precious holidays to it.

Birds, too, were numerous along this new road, and here I saw the only green paroquets noticed in the jungle. I was standing by the stem of a small dead tree, gaunt, withered, and brown, without a leaf to boast of, and my white clothes were partly hidden from above by a flowering creeper, when there was a rush of wings, a loud screeching, and a flock of at least a couple of hundred of these emerald-green birds came up, wheeled twice round the dead tree, and then settled altogether in a cloud. The contrast was very striking; for whereas a moment ago the branches were bare and leafless, they now seem buried in green foliage from the highest to the lowest, and the tree had regained its youthful beauty as rapidly as though touched by the wand of an enchanter. But the delusion did not last long, for I was soon noticed by one of the many pairs of sharp eyes, and, with a chorus of deafening shrieks, the whole covey took to flight.

This road-making was dangerous work, on account of the snakes which we often dislodged

from the low herbage and rubbish. Many of these I caught and took home, much to the disgust of the coolies. Some of them were agile little creatures, with grey skins banded with black; others as long as whip-thongs, and of the loveliest grass-green, with sparkling gold eyes. These are said to hide in bushes, and dart out at the face of any one approaching, but, as far as my experience goes, they make the best of every opportunity to escape. One big snake I caught and killed, as I thought, and took him back with me in my coat pocket. I subsequently rolled him up very neatly, and tied a label round his neck, with his scientific name, and putting him into a bottle of spirits, corked it up. But the spirits seemed to have revived him, for in the night he drunk up the greater part, pushed the cork out of the bottle, and returned to his native jungles none the worse for his little adventure. How astonished some one will be if he catches him again with that label round his neck and smelling strongly of native brandy!

Although never actually meeting with an accident, I have killed several deadly snakes at close quarters. On one occasion Mrs. R——'s

smallest boy, a chubby little fellow, very fond of collecting for me, brought me a small grey snake with a square head, which he was holding by the tip of the tail. Directly I saw it I knew it was the deadly tic-polonga, and, though a small specimen, possessed of poison powerful enough to kill a horse. I took it safely from him, but it was a dangerous moment for the little fellow. On another occasion, when walking down a jungle-path with L——, my companion actually strode right across a black cobra, five feet long, which was lying across the path. This snake gave chase to L——, who "made tracks" as fast as he could go, until I got a chance and killed the enemy with a single shot from my rifle. His skin, though not brilliant, was very striking, blue-black with a velvety spectacle-like mark behind the head.

Sometimes, however, the snake gets the best of the encounter. I once lent some coolies to a surveyor working on the other side of the river, and one of these men trod on a tic-polonga some four feet long, whereupon the reptile turned at once and struck him in the ankle. The Englishman's remedy was prompt and effectual, but

terribly painful. He at once cut away the flesh all round the wound, as though he were operating on an apple, and then poured in boiling water from the camp kettle. This rough treatment was successful. The man was sent back to me to be nursed; and although he subsequently came out all over his body with spots, as though he had contracted smallpox, and spent the greater part of his time in a state of coma, he eventually recovered, and went away well to his own country.

When the sun was at its hottest and straight overhead, though we still worked on at our road-making, most of the birds hid themselves in the thickest gloom of the jungle, and the woods were very silent and gloomy, with only the sound of our own ringing axes to be heard. Yet there was twittering and singing enough in the early morning. One big hawk sailed over us for many days, no matter what the heat was, until at last I got to look out regularly for his graceful flight and wide-barred wings high up over our heads. In the evening the birds came out again as we wandered homewards, and the curious rocket-bird, with feathers in his tail twice as long as his body, thin and thread-like

up to the tip, where there was a paddle-like enlargement, played about on the tops of the trees, and enlivened the scene with its gambols.

One evening, instead of returning with the coolies, I sent them home, and, mounting a pony which had been brought over for me, rode away to W———'s, to have a look at the newspapers and see how our friends the Turks were getting on. I did not mount to return till late, as by chance my host seemed not so sleepy as usual. But at last I was in the saddle, and by the time his estate was left behind the sun had set and the jungles were buried in profound gloom, which the full moon did little to dissipate. However, I pressed on, and the horse willingly made for his stables. We brushed through the dewy coffee of a couple of estates, forded a moonlight nullah, and frightened a fox out of his wits as he was coming down to drink. We cantered downhill and scrambled up the rises, thoroughly enjoying the cool fresh air and the silent darkness, until we came to a lonely hollow, through which a little rill ran tinkling downwards, and the forest trees crowded in and shut out all the light, while the wild sago waved about, as it seemed, of its own accord. This place was

supposed to be haunted, as six coolies had died of cholera by the side of the little stream, and a robbery had been committed there some years before. Besides that, it was a great place for bears, who have a liking for horseflesh; and my little "tat" seemed to know this, for he snorted and shook his head, and, without a word from me, started off at a canter up the rocky path. At one place the bridle-track passed under a strange fantastic pile of rocks, looking silent and grim under the occasional rays of the moon; and I was just thinking what an excellent post it would make for dacoits, and letting the pony have all the rein he wanted, when, without a moment's warning, a rope was thrown over my neck, and I was dragged right back to the crupper of the saddle. To say I "saw stars" would be putting it very mildly. The whole sky seemed to burst into a blaze of comets, and my own eyes seemed to flame with blue light. But I kept in the saddle, and reined the horse right back on his haunches, at the same time drawing a long hunting-knife from my belt, the only thing I had with me. Of course, I expected it was dacoits—what else could it have been? but they did not put in an appearance,

and, lifting up my hand after a moment of suspense, I found something round my neck, very rope-like, but not twisted, and hard and smooth, which a little more investigation showed to be the long pliant stem of a rattan creeper. Thus the mystery was solved; I had run my neck into the loop of one of the creepers which hang in graceful curves from tree to tree everywhere in the forest. But I suffered from a sore throat for a week afterwards, and, as may be supposed, finished that dark ride at a more moderate pace.

No clearer or sadder proof could be required of the feebleness of the coolies, and the constitutional ruin wrought on them by the famine, than the way in which they succumbed to fever and sickness. There was no other reason why I should hold out better than they did, for my hut was almost eave by eave with their "lines," and we both shared the same weather, and yet they died around me from simple attacks of fever which only staggered me for a day or so. Lately they had been going off at an astonishing and piteous rate. A great number of Tamils came up during my absence in Bombay—miserable famine-stricken wretches, thin and weak. They had been too suddenly

exposed to the deadly air of our jungles, and half of them had died in less than a month. On one side of the Bungalow Hill stream there was a living population above ground, and on the other an almost equally large population underground.

The remainder of the coolies, very naturally, had enough of this sort of thing, and feeling a "foolish hankering for existence," they took all their small belongings with them to the bazaar at the head of the ghaut one Sunday, and when the fair was over, instead of returning to us and dying like straightforward folk according to their agreements, they went away to their own country and dissolved amongst the lowland villages of Mysore. I had seen them start that Sunday morning, for I was sitting in my verandah, according to custom, reading, with a gay English flag flying from a staff above the hut, and I noticed that several of the old coolies and maistries to whom I had been kind salaamed lower than usual as they passed me, but attached no importance to it. However, the next morning I and D—— were surprised to see how few natives mustered when we rang the big bell. We rang again and

again, and "the stoker" got wild with rage, but as the coolies were thirty miles away by that time no wonder they did not hear. This was rather a loss to the company, as each coolie took away the cumbly or coarse goat's-hair shawl we had lent him by way of monsoon clothing, and nearly all had gone away owing the estate the two or three rupees' advance which had been made not long before to induce them to come up to the jungles. I should put this loss at about Rs. 1500, twice as much as it would have cost to build the poor wretches good "lines" and keep them on the estate. After this, operations came to rather a standstill, and we were forced to wait until R—— sent us up two or three hundred men—Canarese this time by way of a change—from the lowlands.

Meantime, I was beginning to wonder how long I could hold out myself. Hitherto I had accepted the repeated attacks of fever as a thing which must be, and had anxiously watched to find them decreasing in strength, but they got worse and worse. I had been delirious twice, and had now had fever often and badly.

This I could have stood perhaps, were it

not for the leeches, but those wretched things were "the most unkindest cut of all," and very nearly reduced me to the condition of skin and bones. I bore them, as a naturalist, no particular or personal antipathy, but their conduct in return was outrageous, and their bloodthirstiness insatiable. Nothing checked them; nothing satisfied! I tried against their assaults top-boots, gaiters, two pairs of socks, and tying the bottoms of the legs of my trousers with string; I even painted my boots with tar, oil, and lime; but they laughed everything to scorn, and the jungles swarmed with their thirsty armies. They attacked me directly I went out, and it was hopeless to escape them. They were so numerous that, if one stopped in the shadow of the trees, they might be seen converging from all points, and regularly racing to get the first suck at the stranger. It is a melancholy fact, but I have felt my own blood squelching in my boots as I have walked home after a long morning in the jungle; and any one who has had the misfortune to feel a single half-dozen of leeches applied for medicinal purposes will understand how the loss of blood affected me. When my hut was

reached, I could do nothing but fall into the nearest chair, while my servant pulled off my boots and crimsoned socks; and then the horrible bloated creatures rolled about the floor like ripe cherries, little thin streams of blood meandering down my feet for half an hour afterwards. On one occasion I took eight leeches off one leg, and eleven off the other, but many others had fed and rolled away. Of course, it is impossible to eat much breakfast under such circumstances, and mine was often left scarcely tasted, though I felt always wonderfully thirsty. There would follow a brief respite for writing letters and reading, but then the sodden boots had to be pulled on again, and I went forth to hobble through the forest, about as comfortable as though I were walking on red-hot plates.

This sort of thing had gone on for a long time, until at last the fever came on my bloodless frame very badly one day. No amount of quinine would stop it; I was alone and unattended in my little hut, tossing about in all the miseries of the hot stage, and feeling, to tell the truth, considerably "played out" and uncomfortable, when by a fortunate chance F—— came over on his white pony, and dismounted

at my verandah. He showed himself, as usual, cheery and considerate, but said he considered me very ill, and advised me to come away with him to Varlavachen Bungalow. I explained that I could not leave everything to D——, who was then on the estate, without warning; so F—— stayed by me a little longer, and then rode away, and I relapsed into my former condition. But in half an hour F—— was back. He had galloped up Bungalow Hill, interviewed D——, told him I was really very ill and persuaded him to take care of everything for a few days, and now came down with violent kindness on me—would not listen to my protests for a moment, but wrapped me up in an astonishing number of coats, put me on the pony, and walked at the side as we made for his eyrie. A curious thing about the fever is that, though it saps the strength and greatly disarranges one's internal economy, for a little time after each attack one feels very well, and has an excellent appetite. Thus a night on F——'s mountain-top, and a good breakfast with all the little comforts which only flourish where a lady presides, set me up, and I could hardly believe I had been so ill the night before. Even F——

noticed the improvement, and, wishing to make the most of my short holiday, invited me to come and try for an ibex with him on the nearest grass hill; and we started, though I was conscious it was a rash enterprise on my part.

We crossed two valleys to the southward, with some coolies behind carrying our rifles, and presently found ourselves on a grassy ridge at the edge of the ghaut overlooking the lowlands. Here, as I might have expected, the exertion told sharply, and I felt the well-known fever creeping back over me. There was nothing to be done but let it take its course; so F—— went ahead with the coolies and guns, and I lay down on a sloping slab of rock, on which the sun was shining fiercely, making it much too hot even for the lizards. But as long as the cold stage lasted I shivered and shook in a frightful manner, with no power to keep myself still; and then suddenly a change arrived, and the hot stage set me perspiring and half mad with the heat, though I had been freezing a few minutes before. Thus things continued until F—— came back, having seen three ibex, but lost the chance owing to the cartridges missing fire in

both barrels. The walk back before the fever had left me was a woeful experience; the headache left by the hot fit was intense, and every joint in my limbs worked rustily with rheumatism. The last hill all but finished me. It was a very rough experience, and I have never suffered more than I did in mounting that rocky slope, with my head reeling, my blood boiling and shooting to and fro in my veins. But at length we gained the Varlavachen plateau, and a coolie F—— had sent ahead for brandy and water hove in sight. I had drunk nothing all day, and my thirst was intense. Once I had filled my helmet at a stream; but the water was bright green—concentrated essence of decayed vegetation—and I had poured it back untasted, so my feelings may be guessed when the brandy-pawnee arrived. I asked F—— if he wanted any, and he looked at me and shook his head; so I took the silver tankard, and tilted it up and up until I could see the kites in the sky overhead through the glass bottom, and I never before tasted so bitterly earned or so delightful a draught.

This bungalow, which I have described before, is a delightful place, but it had one

drawback, which was the rats. Even down in my own hut they were very numerous, and a trap, which I set every night, often sprang with a clap before I had left it a minute, so that I was constantly hopping in and out of my cot to remove the victims and reset it. But up at F——'s the rats simply swarmed, and at night they came forth from their hiding-places and ate up everything left within their reach. On the evening after the ibex expedition, no sooner had I put out the lights and rolled myself up comfortably, than they were pattering all over the bed; and though I kicked vigorously every now and then, it only caused a temporary scare. I fired off all the boots and slippers in reach, a lot of hats and helmets, all F——'s shaving materials, and several brushes and combs, then the pillow, and finally the bolster, which brought down some crockery, and drove them away for a good ten minutes; when, making use of the opportunity, I went to sleep. But they soon returned to the charge, getting so bold that one woke me up by actually sitting on my forehead. There was no mistake about this, for I seized him there, and threw him to the other end of the room. However, they are

harmless creatures, though remarkably inquisitive; so that, after the first novelty of the thing had worn off, their gambols over my couch and reckless leaps about the furniture did not keep me awake for long.

The next and subsequent days were spent reading in the verandah, though I had two more sharp attacks, which even the fresh mountain air could not mitigate; and F—— earnestly advised a long holiday at Ootacamund, on the healthy Neilgherry Hills, or even a return to England, as I had come to that state in which my strength no more rebounded after each attack. I passed now each interval in a strange sort of sleepy condition, careless of everything around, and doing everything in a listless, lackadaisical style, which my kind host said was a very bad sign.

My exercise was confined to circumnavigating the terrace round the hill-top and revelling in the wide prospect. From my chair I saw one morning a string of six wild elephants cross the brow of a hill four or five miles away, and disappear over the sky-line. They looked like great brown mice, and followed one another in Indian file to their distant retreats. Had I

been well, we would have given chase to them, and made a nearer acquaintance with these jungle monsters. Another time, while meditating on the wonderful expanse of virgin forests to the eastward, a brown cloud, like the smoke of burning bamboos, appeared in the valley below, and rolled rapidly up the hillside, accompanied by a strange humming sound. When it came nearer, it developed into a mighty swarm of wild bees, so large that, in all my apian experience, I had never seen the like. As they were taking a "bee-line,"—nothing indeed could be straighter than their flight towards my position,—I stooped down on one knee, and soon they were spinning overhead like a brown hailstorm, and actually dimming the light of the sun. There must have been many thousand all following in the flight of the queen-bee, and I watched them until they were lost in the forests beyond.

On the fourth morning of my visit, having had no fever during the night, I felt duty-bound to get back to my own jungles, and take some of the work off D——'s shoulders; so, breakfast over, and due thanks having been paid to my generous entertainers, I slung my

rifle, took a last look round and a long breath of fresh air, and plunged down into the fatal jungle. That same rifle had grown wondrously heavy lately. Not so long before, it hung light as a feather at my back, but now it felt a ponderous mass of wood and iron, and I shifted its position twenty times in a mile.

The jungles were fearfully hot and close after Varlavachen, though it was just the weather for the collector. Insects of all sorts were abundant, and enjoying themselves while the warm weather lasted, for we were on the brink of the wet monsoon, and they would soon have to hybernate or die. One dead tree was a magnificent sight, being surrounded by hundreds of the lovely brass-green *Chrysochroa fulgida*, an almond-shaped beetle nearly two inches in length, and each green wing-case adorned with a rosy stripe running down it. As these insects flew round and round the withered stem, they made a beautiful display in the bright sunlight, and one not easily to be forgotten.

Then I came across a bright emerald-coated lizard of large size, with gold eyes and a wonderful prismatic throat, sky-blue, orange-

yellow, and vivid red, all fading into each other; but the gaudiness of this dandy lacertan made him shy, and he would not stop to be closely investigated. The smaller grey lizards were, as ever, very common, and glided over and under the fallen timber in every direction. One attracted my attention particularly by his violent contortions, and, capturing him easily with my hand, I found a very large, soft-bodied beetle was firmly fixed in his mouth. He could not swallow it, as it was stuck in his teeth, and could not eject it for the same reason; so, not liking to leave him in such an uncomfortable predicament, I took the liberty of pushing the beetle down his throat with a grass stem, for which he seemed very much obliged when placed in freedom once more.

In many places the sandy drifts were pitted with the little hollows made by the ant-lions, the curious little larva of a clear-winged fly. At the bottom of each little excavation crouched the small lobster-shaped creature, buried up to his eyes in sand, with nothing showing but a long and sharp pair of forceps. Woe to the foraging ant that ventured on the brink of that treacherous pit, for he is sure to slip in and be

devoured by the vigilant monster below, who sits expectant all day, with a good appetite always at command when a victim arrives.

Then there were many birds about—a fine black thrush haunting the underwood, whence, when disturbed, he rose with a long-drawn and melancholy whistle. Although his general colour was the deepest velvety black, he had on either shoulder an epaulet of bright sky-blue feathers, wonderfully conspicuous by contrast. This was the *Myiophonus Horsfieldii* of science, a well-known bird of Southern India. A brisk little nut-hatch, of a slaty blue colour (*Dendrophila frontalis*), was also very busy about the decaying trees, and exhibited all the wonderful clinging and climbing capabilities of his family. Really it seemed to him to be a matter of the most profound indifference which way his head was when he swallowed a fat grub or a juicy beetle, and he seemed at times to defy the law of gravitation.

But the most remarkable and beautiful birds seen during this walk were those of a family of six splendid jet-black woodpeckers, with flaming crimson crests, which were hard at work hammering at a dead tree as I passed. These

birds were probably the *Picus Hodgsoni*, though there are two or three Southern Indian varieties of woodpeckers very much alike in general plumage, and it was only the second time I had observed them in these jungles.

During the next few days after my return, two hundred Canarese coolies arrived on the estate, and R—— came back with them. They were a poor lot, even worse than the Tamils who had recently run away; but when the superintendent showed them the deserted "lines," and told them to take up their quarters there, they said they were much too dirty, and would not move into them until they were thoroughly cleaned out—an expression of opinion which made R—— doubtless feel very small, but pleased and amused me. By the way, while the "lines" were being cleaned, all these men and women camped round my hut, and, having no servant just then, and nothing but a latch on the door, they could have made off with anything they wished during my absence; but nothing was touched.

When that "boy" of mine did come back, after having got over his fear of the cholera, I was very glad, as he relieved me of the dis-

tasteful job of cooking my own meals. He had asked permission to get his wife and baby up from the lowlands, which I had readily given, as he assured me his wife was "very small," and would not eat much of my food; so one morning my breakfast was interrupted by the arrival of a very diminutive woman, half hidden under a load of cooking-pots and sleeping-mats, with a brown baby perched on top. "Whose is this?" I inquired. "Oh, sahib," said the "boy," "he's my wife." So we exchanged salaams, and the new additions to my household took up their quarters in the rear. It was a matter of some curiosity to me how they lodged in the little tiny kitchen, until, going to doctor my servant one day, when he was ill with fever, I found him and his better half coiled up like a couple of squirrels on the two rough boards which served as dresser and table, and the baby suspended from the roof in a shawl. On that day the "boy" was too ill to cook me any dinner, so it was done, and done very well, by his wife. But she was much too shy to place it on my table, and instead seized the opportunity, when I was having a wash, to put dishes, crockery, etc., just inside the door, and placing the cloth

on top, bolted back to the kitchen; so the arranging was left to myself.

The brown baby was very inquisitive, and occasionally crawled into my verandah to take a good stare at the burra sahib, whom he seemed to think a most curious object; but his mother generally interrupted the contemplation by snatching him up by his waistcloth and bearing him howling away. His parents were equally amusing sometimes. For instance, for about a week everything sent in to me was roasted or fried, nothing was ever boiled; and when I came to ask an explanation, it turned out my servant had imported some chickens from the lowlands, and one hen had undertaken to make a nest and hatch some eggs in my only saucepan; so the "boy," not liking to disturb her, had resolved to do all my cooking in a frying-pan or before the fire. On another day his wife volunteered to prepare me some soup for breakfast, as her husband was ill again; but by mischance, instead of taking a cake of preserved soup, she got hold of a square of brown Windsor soap, and knowing nothing of this material, she carefully boiled it up with carrots and plenty of salt and pepper, and sent it in to me. I

shall not easily forget my first and last taste of that horrible saponaceous broth.

The "boy" seemed to share the usual indifference of the natives for the fate of their countrymen and former friends, and, excepting as it put himself in danger, seemed totally careless of suffering and sorrow—very likely the effects of seeing too much of both. Thus, amongst the creatures I had collected round me to relieve the solitude of the jungle, was a fox-terrier and three half-grown puppies, all of them a present from W——, of Poothpara. It was an amusing sight to see the old dog lead out the young ones to hunt in the jungle, and when I shot them anything they used to go frantic with delight. But they were also much given to foraging on their own account. On one occasion they were out all day, and it was only when I was seated at dinner that there came the patter of canine feet in the verandah, and the truants filed in, and, sneaking under the table, went to sleep at once, appearing to suffer from fearfully bad dreams. "Boy," I said to the servant behind my chair, "how is it my dogs look so full and sleep so badly?" "The sahib's dogs," he said, "have been hunting in the

jungle and found dead coolie. They not want any more dinner for very long time;" and this he said with perfect placidity, as though it were a very ordinary occurrence.

Another of my pets was a cat, but she was only nominally mine, although I gave eight annas for her in the lowlands. From the very first she utterly refused to recognize me as her owner, but made herself a nest in the thatch of the roof, whence she sallied forth at night, killed my chickens, upset my lamps, and ate my provisions in a truly lawless way. I only saw her once after I let her out of the basket on her arrival, and then it was to fire at her with a rifle as she was darting up a tree, under the impression she was a new species of wild jungle cat.

Speaking of cats and trees reminds me of a slight adventure I had some time before with a large member of the feline tribe, which might easily have resulted disastrously for me. The weather was particularly hot, and, having done a long morning's work in some clearings far to the southward, I was slowly taking my way homewards to breakfast; but, being in no particular hurry, I thought I would

rest a little under a beautiful spreading tree which grew close beside a dry nullah, nearly choked with long reeds and wild sago. I shut my umbrella up, placing it against the trunk, and then, for want of something better to do, took out my pocket-knife and proceeded to carve my initials on the smooth bark. I am rather skilful at carving initials, the result of practice, perhaps, and it was five minutes or more before those of mine pleased me sufficiently to be thought finished. But when there was nothing else to be done to them, I shut the knife with a click, and slipping it into my pocket, let my eyes wander up the beautiful smooth trunk of the noble tree. Judge of my feelings when I saw crouching on a branch scarcely six feet above my head, so low, indeed, I could have poked it with the ferule of my umbrella, a full-grown and gleaming-eyed panther. His body was partly hidden by the branch, but his tail hung over one side, and his head looked over the other, and in the deep shade his eyes shone like opals. When our glances met, his lips curled up slowly into a fierce snarl, showing all his white teeth, and I saw his claws grip into the green bark ready for

a spring, and instinctively my hand went down to the hunting-knife in my belt. For a moment things hung in suspense, and the next second might have pitted his vast strength, great weight, and superior position against my knife and fever-wasted muscles. But he kept his place, though his eyes watched every movement; so I judged discretion was in this case the best part of valour, and, slowly taking up my umbrella and keeping my eyes full on his, I backed off until the tree was hidden by others, and then took a swift "bee-line" for my hut to fetch a rifle. But by the time I was armed and back at the tree, the panther was gone, and I never saw him again. Had he chanced to be hungry, or a fraction more ready for a fight, he would doubtless have saved you, courteous reader, all the trouble of wading through this chapter, by putting a final stop to the author's wanderings in the jungle.

CHAPTER XVI.

THROUGH WATER AND FIRE.

At last the hot weather ended, and the heavy grey clouds, which had been hurrying over the sky like the skirmishers of a vast army, banked themselves up and flooded the thirsty land. The first few heavy drops fell one day while L—— and I were smoking in my verandah, but they were only the forerunners of the great downpour, though they made the withered leaves on the ground hop and rustle, and frightened the lizards horribly before they stopped, leaving the air full of a wonderfully fragrant smell, as of wet wine-coolers.

But the monsoon burst that night in serious earnest. It was impossible to get to sleep—the air was so dense and hot, and the mosquitoes were so busy and furious in every direction. Up to eleven o'clock there was a profound

hush outside, and I was almost asleep, when there came a blinding flash of lightning, and immediately afterwards a loud peal of thunder, and the wind crept up from the valley and began to rock the tree-tops. Then down came the rain in continuous sheets, followed by more lightning, which enabled me to catch glimpses of the path and hillside streaming with water, the tree-trunks shining as though they were carved out of silver, and everything far and near dripping and hanging down limp under the tropical midnight downpour. I was wondering what the monkeys were doing outside, and all the dry-weather creatures, but soon found that charity begins at home, and that it was quite unnecessary to pride myself on being safe under shelter. The thatch of my roof had been put on early in the year, and during the dry weather it had shrunk considerably, so that, instead of forming a compact mass, as old thatch should, it was more like fresh straw loosely laid down. Consequently, when the rain began to descend in earnest, it found its way through into my sleeping compartment with very little difficulty. I was sitting up in my charpoy listening to

the howling of the wind, by this time blowing a regular hurricane, and watching the bright blue forks of lightning playing about the tree-tops, when I was suddenly aware of a little trickle of water descending down my back, and then another and another rivulet developing. It was necessary to act promptly; so, springing up, I rolled all the bed-things into a mass, and covered them with a waterproof. Then, opening an umbrella, I sat on top in my flannel sleeping-suit, and calmly watched my property being flooded. It was a profoundly uncomfortable night, and my position was both cold and ridiculous. The rain came in everywhere, and soon everything was afloat, while as fast as I lit lamp after lamp, the rain-water put them out and left me in darkness. When the roof of one's house plays one false, it is hopeless to contend against the elements. I made two or three attempts, and found a little shelter for some of my best books under the dining table, but the greater part of my belongings were soon hopelessly saturated. My bed was also converted into a sort of tent, more or less dry, by crossing cords from the four posts and throwing coats and shawls over

them. Into this harbour of refuge I crept, and watched the water coming down the walls and descending in cascades from the roof, for there was no sleep for me. The tempest howled overhead, and the trees rocked and groaned, until every moment I expected one to come crashing through the roof of my deluged hut. Indeed, a great trunk did fall a little higher up the ridge, and I could feel the concussion in my hut, so near was it. Then another matter kept me awake. My hut, like every house in India, was a great harbourage for all sorts of strange creatures in the insect way, besides bats, snakes, rats, lizards, and so on. All these creatures were flooded out of my walls and roofs, and wandered aimlessly about the furniture and floor. Such a chance was not to be lost, and, careless of being wetted through and through, every now and then I emerged from under the shelter of my tent to secure and box a strange centipede, or give chase to a big spider, or to paddle about with bare feet after a lizard which looked something out of the ordinary. In this way I made some considerable additions to my collection that night, and with the exception

of being wet through all the time, with no chance of sleeping, I was not so desperate as may be supposed. Nevertheless, I felt glad when dawn broke and daylight made it possible to move about freely; till, finally, a good breakfast with plenty of hot coffee set me up again.

With the breaking of another monsoon the work relapsed into its old channels, and nothing was done now but constant "planting out" of the young seedlings in the places they were to occupy—a dreadfully monotonous labour, which goes on day after day without stop or variety. Thus we had passed through a whole year of a new estate, and some idea of the round of operations may have been gathered by the reader. Afterwards it would become more varied, and when there arises a prospect of a crop it is necessary to build "pulping houses," where the ripe cherry-like berries are subjected to constant streams of water and freed from the soft fleshy outer part, the hard stone inside (which is the coffee of commerce) being roughly dried on carefully levelled plots of ground, and sent down to Calicut or elsewhere, on the backs of bullocks, to be divested of a thin silvery skin

which still enwraps the bean. Thus it is prepared for exportation and consumption in the European markets; and little the comfortable citizens at breakfast, or homefolk as they sip their after-dinner *cafè noir*, think or know by what hard work the rough material has been grown and prepared for their use!

On July 21st an accident happened which forced a holiday upon me, whether I would or no. Perhaps it was even fortunate it occurred, as otherwise I should not have left the jungles until perchance carried down the ghauts feet foremost.

I was busy writing, and the evening being cold and wet, and fever still hanging about me, on that eventful day I had made a fire in the stove in my little hut, the chimney of which passed up through the thatch of the roof. The dinner was standing ready on the table and the lamp was burning brightly, but, as the next day was mail day, I wrote on and on, absorbed in my occupation. The temperature of the room suddenly increased very rapidly, and a sort of red glow came on the paper, which I remembered afterwards, but at the time thought little of. However, the heat became so notice-

able, that I at last started up to attend to the stove, which I supposed was the culprit; but, to my dismay and astonishment, directly my eyes were raised, I saw the whole roof of my hut already in flames, and burning fiercely under a strong wind which was howling through the trees outside. What followed was very brief and decisive. My "boy" was just coming round from the kitchen with a dish of curry, but when he saw this astonishing sight he stood spell-bound for a moment, and then down went the curry, and he flew to the big bell hanging on a tree close by, and rang a peal which brought the coolies swarming up the hill in a dusky yelling crowd from their "lines." Half a glance showed me it was impossible to save the hut, for it was now well alight, and the strong wind increased the flames every moment, while the nearest water was at the bottom of the hill, and I knew well that before we could collect chatties and organize a fire brigade, it would be all over. So I proceeded to save what was possible. The estate books were got out first, along with a lot of my own, which will bear the marks of the jungle mud, into which they were thrown, as

long as they last; and then I unlocked some drawers and salvaged several parcels of money. By this time the place was like an oven and burning "fore and aft," and the wild-looking crowd of coolies outside were yelling and dancing about quite at their wits' end. One old woman rushed bravely in, and making for my sleeping compartment, seized a blanket and pillow, which she gripped tight in her dusky arms and carried about with her for the rest of the time, being much too excited to put them down anywhere. Fired by this example, some coolies made a rush into the porch. Unfortunately, my door opened outwards, and in the scuffle it banged to and was kept hard shut in my face by the great crowd outside, of whom the men nearest the door were pressed close against it by the others further away. In vain I kicked and shouted; it was shut firm, and the dense yellow smoke was blinding me and getting down my throat. At length I called out to the head native maistry, whom I knew was outside, "Jowra maistry, knock some of those fools down and clear my door." Then there came the refreshing "whack, whack!" of his stick, and the crowd parted and the door opened, but

not a moment too soon. Already the flaming mass of the roof overhead was rocking on the slender uprights which supported it. Any moment it might fall. The last I saw of the interior of my poor hut was the ready-set table, the lamp still burning placidly in the thick yellow smoke, the white tablecloth on fire in twenty places, and big flakes of matting falling, smoking, to right and left. Scarcely had the door opened and freed me, when I heard the sharp crack of my revolver, which hung up loaded at the head of my bed, and the bullet whistled overhead. The pistol had become red-hot, and now added to the general confusion by falling to the ground, and every now and then leaping up and firing a shot promiscuously into the crowd. This reminded me of my unfortunate guns, which there had been no time to save, and they, in turn, reminded me of a new, unopened five-gallon tin of kerosene oil which stood in my bedroom. I would have fetched it out, though it were red-hot, had there been any chance of its staying the fire; but, as it was, I was so disgusted with the loss of my property, I thought it might as well take its chance and end up the tomasha by a grand

final firework. And so it did! The coolies had scarcely obeyed my warning and got behind trees, when there was a terrific bang, which was heard right up on top of Bungalow Hill; a great column of smoke, flames, and sparks leapt right up to the tree-tops, singeing the leaves; and then, dying down, the roof fell in, followed by what remained of the walls. For a moment everything was brightly illuminated, but soon the fire went out with a sudden calm, and I was aware I was standing in my slippers, bare-headed, in the rain, which was falling fast now, by the smoking cinders of the poor little house which had sheltered me for ten or eleven months.

That night I slept rolled up in a blanket on the floor of L——'s bungalow on the hill, and the next morning, after a melancholy search amongst the ruins for treasure trove—in which I found rupees and annas fused into lumps, and only the metal-work of my guns remaining—I confided my servants, my dogs, all my belongings that could be got together (and the cat, if she could be found) to the care of my friend; borrowed a pair of boots and a hat, and, mounting the estate pony, turned my back on the

Pardagherry jungles, meaning to go to Calicut to refit and see a doctor, and perhaps take a holiday, if he prescribed one, at that great resort of the broken-down Southern Indians, the Neilgherry Hills.

CHAPTER XVII.

VANQUISHED BY FEVER.

NEVER was a more melancholy ride than that of mine the day after the disastrous fire which thus forced leave of absence upon me. And yet it has left a very slight impression on my memory; all that occurs to me when I think of it was that I was racked with pain, and so weak it was difficult to sit in the saddle. I can remember the blinding torrents of rain which poured down unceasingly as the lonely jungle paths leading to the head of the ghaut were paced, and the torrents of water cutting the path up with innumerable rills. But although wet through before being in the saddle many minutes, it made no difference to me; all my thoughts were full of regret at leaving the estate unfinished, and turning my back on my

friends and companions. Whether we went slow or fast, I have no idea; but presently the horse stopped of its own accord, and, looking up, I saw we were in front of the Comlocoda Bungalow, which lies a little off the main road at the head of the ghaut. A night's lodging was begged of the owner, a brother of my lively friend, C. H——, and readily granted, and together we dined and spent the evening, beguiling the time with rival stories of past adventures. H—— gave me a history of all his guns and hunting gear, and the great numbers of animals he had killed in various wanderings.

I had spent a good many uncomfortable nights lately, but perhaps that at Comlocoda was the worst of all. The only "shake-down" which my host had to offer me was an old sofa which stood in one corner of the room; and belonging to the straight-backed sort which our forefathers seem to have liked so much, even in its very remote youth it must have been uncomfortable. Now nearly all the stuffing was gone, and there were three deep hollows and three sharp ridges in it. To lie on it full length was most indescribably miserable, and it was almost as bad to repose with your

chin between your knees. During the long dreary hours of that stormy night, while the wind howled outside and the rain pelted on the "shingle" roof, I tried every position I knew of to get just so much rest as would let me go to sleep; but it was quite impossible, and the last night of my sojourn in the jungles will never fade from my memory. At last, racked with rheumatism and dysentery, and feeble with long-continued fever, I went out into the verandah, and, sinking into an arm-chair, felt my sand was nearly run out. It was a fearful night, the wind howling like legions of ghosts among the dead and fire-blackened trees along the margin of the clearings and the white mist sweeping in sheets over the waving coffee, eddying this way and that, and twisting like a monstrous serpent amongst the fallen logs. Once a tall spectral form was seen hurrying up the pathway, with the dead leaves eddying about it, and in the darkness of the night came straight towards me, mounted the steps in so ghostly a way that I had half risen from my chair, when a gust of wind came rattling off the roof and dissolved it into mist. It was in this very chair and on this

spot that a brother of H——'s died, little more than a year ago. He was a great shikaree and a friend of F——'s, who had told me how he came out from England and opened this estate single-handed. But the fever found him out, and at last he was so ill that he was obliged to go down to Calicut, where the doctors told him he must stay for a long time; but he was naturally impatient, started for the jungles before he was completely recovered, and walked up the ghaut from Wallenghay one hot day to his hut. There did not seem to be anything the matter with him when he arrived; nevertheless, half an hour afterwards, when the "boy" brought him the coffee which he had ordered, he was found sitting in this chair, with his head sunk forward and quite dead. All that night the wind howled and the lightning played about amongst the forest trees, until a little before dawn the moon struggled forth and the rain began to fall more lightly; and when at last the welcome day did break, the sun found our part of the world very misty and dripping with last night's rain, but otherwise quiet and pleasant.

A light breakfast disposed of, and thanks

made for the night's shelter, I found myself in the saddle again, and bound down the ghaut. The only thing of interest, until the bottom was reached, was a miserable coolie boy that I came suddenly upon, lying across the path in the hot sunshine and almost hidden by swarms of flies. At first he seemed dead, for it looked almost impossible that such a hideously dirty and skeleton-like frame could hold any life. He had been out all night in the pelting rain, and the mud and sand was heaped up on one side of him. It would have been best that he were dead, but as I reined in my horse for a moment, he slowly opened his eyes and moved one hand, all he could manage. What could I do? I had no food with me, nothing but money, which would have been mockery to him. I might have taken him on the horse, but the rivers below were all flooded, and I knew it was as much as the horse could do to get across unburdened with anything but myself; so the wretched creature was sadly left behind.

The smaller streams, though much swollen, were crossed without serious difficulty, but when the broad nullah between the foot of the hills and Wallenghay was reached, it was a

different matter, and a halt was made on the brink to consider where the ford lay; for, though the stream was a rapid brown flood, scouring down between its banks, and whirling along trunks of trees, dead cattle, and small islands of rubbish, turning back could not be thought of, and the river had to be crossed at all hazards. So I drove the horse in, though he did not like it much, and kept him as well as I might to where the ford seemed to be; but we went wrong, and getting on the rocks, where the dhobies wash linen in the fine weather, we went ahead all right with the water just up to the stirrups for a few yards, and then the "tat" missed his footing, staggered forward, and down we plunged into deep water with a prodigious splash. Of course, I was drenched through and up to my waist, while the horse was swimming, and nothing but his head showed. The swollen river looked wonderfully broad from the centre, and the stream nearly lifted me out of the saddle twenty times, while as we neared the opposite bank the horse began to pant and blow as though the current was becoming too much for him. But he held out well, and, after narrowly missing getting foul of a floating

mass of broken boughs and jungle *débris*, we climbed out on the far bank, in a very pulpy condition, but with the worst part of the journey over.

There is always something new to be seen on the Indian plains, and to any one like myself, coming fresh from the leafy solitudes of the mountain forests, the life and brightness on them is doubly notable. Ill and overdone as I was, I enjoyed the bright fresh life around me, and felt the new scenery conquering one of the worst effects of fever—the indifference which it inspires to one's surroundings.

The rest of my journey was finished by native cart, and as there were no bridges on the direct line, we made a long detour by little-used roads, which took us through many strange villages, where every one stayed their work and stood in groups, watching the white sahib and speculating as to who he was—a sign that many Englishmen did not pass that way. In each of these hamlets there was a venerable old fig tree in the middle of the principal and only street, with a square of stones round the base, and a few little stone images, bedaubed with red and white paint, sitting round. It was interesting

to see the reverence with which these were treated, no one seeming to pass without salaaming to them. Even the little brown children who chased my cart, stopped for a moment when they came opposite the shrine, and, covering their faces with their hands, bowed low to the village gods, and then set off again to have another look at the stranger. All these little villages, with their tiny grass-covered houses, and women washing at the tanks, and a hundred signs of life, seemed capable of such quiet happiness, that the famine monster who has wasted them appeared doubly terrible. Even yet the poorer classes were very hard pressed for food of any sort, and would go great lengths to obtain it, forgetting even the strongest impulses of Nature. Thus, before leaving Wallenghay, a woman and small girl came into the compound of Vladimir's bungalow, where I was resting, and, after a deal of salaaming, the woman, who was clearly starving, asked, in a trembling voice, if the sahib would buy the little girl and take care of her. She was rather a nice little girl, about twelve years old, and very brown, with big black eyes, and her hair done up in a knot behind; while to

increase her attractiveness the woman had spent their last cowries in cocoa-nut oil, with which she had rubbed her all over, until she shone like a little statue cut out of polished marble. She was clearly much more astonished at the six-foot sahib, all in white clothes, than frightened, and held tight to her mother's saree, while she stared with all her might. I asked how much money would purchase so fascinating a young lady, and, after a moment of hesitation, the woman said I might have her for four rupees—not quite seven and sixpence in English coinage! She was certainly not over-priced; but I had reluctantly to decline the bargain, and gave the woman a note to one of my friends on the hills, begging him to find work for the unfortunate couple, and take special care of the little girl, and then sent them away with enough money to last them until they reached the hill-tops.

Nothing particular happened for the rest of the journey down, except the bandy getting stuck between two rocks in the middle of a flooded stream, the bridge of which we found was too much out of repair to be safely crossed. A considerable time was spent in that absurd

position, until a passing gang of coolies hauled us out. From Palghaut the train was taken to Beypore, and a three hours' spin over the flat rice lands and bamboo clumps brought me to the latter place, where the night was passed in the comfortable hotel over the station.

Perhaps the feeling one experiences most strongly at Beypore is a sense of wonderment that the railway should come to an end there, when the much more populous town of Calicut is only a few miles further on. It is a good arrangement for the native owners of bullock-carts plying between the two places, but for no one else, and the idea that Beypore would soon grow into a seaport has not been justified. Had the railway gone on to Calicut, it would have been much more convenient, and the sea-side town would have been benefited.

About the most numerous residents at this terminus were still the crows. They swarmed everywhere all day long, and there was not a moment's peace from them. If one walked along the beach to drink in the delightful sea-breezes, and watch the green waves of the Indian Ocean come tumbling in, they flew from tree to tree in noisy crowds; and if one should

be so inexperienced and rash as to stop for a moment and pick up a shell or stone, down they came like a black snowstorm, under the impression you had found something eatable, and might presently throw the remains of it away. Their boldness was astonishing. Never did hill tribes rush forward more impetuously to plunder a rich caravan toiling across the plains than these freebooters swooped on anything which offered them a chance of food. They seemed to look upon men as very foolish, wingless creatures, who were, by some strange chance, possessed of great stores of provisions, which they exerted all their ingenuity to share. All the time I breakfasted on the morning after my arrival, there was a native standing behind my chair with a long pole, the use of which I could not at first understand; but soon the crows came rushing in through the open verandah, and over the tops of the blinds, and the man with the stick swung it this way and that to keep them off. Even then one perched on the back of a chair a few places down the table and cawed defiance, until I threw an egg-shell at him, which he pounced upon and eat without the slightest signs of emotion. It was

quite hopeless to try to get rid of them, and as much as we could do, indeed, to defend the food on the table. But the most dashing feat was accomplished by a sooty invader when I was taken a siesta in the balcony over the garden after tiffin. I was reading and smoking in one of the comfortable long armchairs indigenous to India, with a plate of bananas resting on the arm at my elbow. It was not a foot away from my hand, and so might have been considered safe from the most audacious enemy. But there was a crow very wide awake on the rafters, who had noticed my pre-occupation, and waited until I was busy cutting a page. Then he dropped down from his watch-tower, and, shooting by, snatched up the tempting fruit, and bore it away to the garden, leaving me with the broken plate, hardly knowing what had happened. The impudent bird, not content with thieving, added insult to injury by eating the bananas where I could plainly see him at his feast, and cawing at me between each beakful.

The next day the "backwater" was crossed, and then an hour's spin along the interesting palm-covered coast road brought me to Calicut,

where I availed myself of my old privileges as an honorary member of the club, and put up within its pleasant precincts. Amongst my first duties the next day was the ordering of a quantity of household effects and provisions at a large "store" in the centre of the town, close to the great tank, kept by Germans, who originally came out to convert the natives, but seem to find it more profitable to sell them cheap European manufactures at fancy prices.

I had then no intention whatever of finally leaving the jungles, as I could not think myself seriously ill; but when the shopping was over, and the English doctor came to my quarters, he did not take long to undeceive me, and, in fact, expressed his opinion that, weakened as I was by constant fever, a delay of only a few days more in the jungle might have been fatal. He prescribed a long visit to Ootacamund, and would not hear of my returning to the Annamullies for several months to come. So there was nothing to be done but submit.

A few days were spent in Calicut, partly at the club, and partly at the comfortable house of F—— and his family—the great centre of the local society; and then once more the train

was whirling me away from Beypore towards Central India, and the scenery, which had become as familiar to me as though it were all my own back garden, flew rapidly by the windows of the carriage. It was strange to pass Palghaut at mid-day, and see the lofty mountains to the southward blue and grey in the distance, on the summits of which I had been living so lately, and then to take a last look at them and be rushing forward over the lower India plains, which seem to lie flat as the bed of an ancient sea between the coast on the east and west.

The night was spent in the waiting-room of the station of Poothanor, but a bare bench is a hard mattress, and it is astonishing how effectually a swarm of mosquitoes can banish sleep, no matter how heavy one's eyelids may be, or how tired one may feel. Then half a dozen fireflies had lost their way, and careered aimlessly about the ceiling, burning their pale green lamps all the time, and forcing me to watch their devious flights. Why should Nature have put their lanterns under their bodies? It would be much more reasonable if they were at their heads, for then they could

see where they were going, and save themselves all that ridiculous colliding with the walls and rafters. These things might have been put up with, and sleep, "Nature's sweet restorer," wooed successfully, but for the constant rattle and whistling of trains laden with grain for the famine crops, which were shunting all night long just outside. Thus, I got little rest, and gladly hailed the dawn; soon after which the engine lights of the Madras mail train, which was to take me on to the foot of the Neilgherries, loomed out of the dim light down the line.

The branch railway from Poothanor goes nearly due northward through Coimbatore, a pretty, fresh-looking English settlement by the side of a wide river, to Metapolliam, where it ends; and the traveller, getting out and turning his glance to the northwards, sees the lowermost tiers of the Neilgherries, rising one above another in green forest-clad undulations, and trending back towards some misty grey hills, which are the topmost peaks of the southern barrier of the plateau.

The very word Metapolliam is associated in my mind with roasting dry heat. What the

place must be like in the "hot season" Heaven only knows, for even in the south-west monsoon it is fearful and almost unbearable. Even the dogs seemed to have rubbed and scratched off most of their shaggy coats after finding them too oppressive, and lie about helpless in the shadows of the station, with their tongues hanging out of their mouths. To get any food before the ascent of the hills is commenced, one must go to the Station Hotel, about half a mile away; so thither I bent my steps. Imagine a ruinous old building in a stony compound, surrounded by a broken-down wall, and just one ragged old tree hanging in a dejected manner over the fragments of a dried-up well. Such is this place; but unless you can also picture the fierce glare of the sun overhead, making half the ruins black as ink and half dazzling white, you will only form a partial idea of it. Of course, I had an old chicken for breakfast—we always do at "travellers' bungalows" in India—and then made arrangements for the stage to Coonor. "Will the sahib have a munchiel?" asked the unclad hotel "boy." "Yes," the sahib would. He was not going to ride up four thousand feet of mountain-side in

such heat as this. "And how many old women does the sahib want?" At first the sahib did not think he wanted any old women at all, but the "boy" explained that they were the usual luggage-carriers up the ghaut; so two were ordered, and a messenger sent off at a slinging trot to get the bearers and hammock ready at the commencement of the ascent, which is a couple of miles or so from the hotel.

The road thither was very bad, and going over it in a closed buggy, my experiences were decidedly painful. Every now and then we came to a place where a bridge was being mended or an embankment repaired, and the driver turned down into the fields at the side and urged his cattle over the plough and among the aloe bushes, while we rolled and pitched about like a packet boat in the "chops of the Channel." He seemed to take this as a matter of course, but it was new to me. Still the road was interesting. Along the sides there were rows of short sun-dried trees, under which the brown sheep struggled for the shady corners and panted with open mouths, while the crows on the branches sat with drooping wings, too hoarse to croak; and bright butter-

flies sailed about among the great yellow star-like flowers of the cactus bushes which tinged the plain far and near. Occasionally we met bullock-carts blocking up the greater part of the road, and raising clouds of dust, to the intense wrath of my driver, who heaped abuse on the ancestors of the sleepy native driver and his cattle; and then at last we reached the limit of the plain.

I had certainly fancied that everything on the road to the fashionable "Ooty," the great holiday place of all the Madras officials, would be well kept and clean; but Metapolliam is utterly ruinous, and this changing place at the foot of the hills was fearfully dirty, littered up with old and broken-down conveyances of all sorts, while coolies, dogs, white children grovel on all sides in the hot sand. But if man and his works were rather vile, Nature was undoubtedly lovely; and I was soon ascending in my comfortable munchiel, borne on the shoulders of a half-dozen Tamils, by a really beautiful road, winding amongst an astonishing tangle of tropical vegetation. It was one continuous thicket of cocoa-palms, plantains, bamboos, and *Butea frondosa*, all matted together

by a wonderful labyrinth of thick or slender creepers, some with bright flowers, and all hanging in graceful curves from stem to stem. These jungles, although very lovely, are very dangerous at night, on account of the fever generated in them, and the numerous wild animals which wander about the hillsides; indeed, before the road was cut and much traffic disturbed the solitudes, they were the best place for tigers in the south of India, and there are still a considerable number of the striped jungle monarchs in the neighbourhood. So they should be passed in the daytime whenever practicable. As we went ever upward, now backwards, now forwards, according to the winding of the road, the scenery was very fine. At times the path led us along the brow of a ridge, from which we could look far down into a deep valley with a foaming torrent at the bottom, breaking into sheets of silver among the fresh green foliage, and then up the rugged, rocky side of the opposite mountain, where, perhaps, the land was being cleared for a coffee plantation. There were telegraph wires along the roadside in places, and strings of birds sat on them, so that at a distance they seemed to

be suspended in the sky by some invisible power. Gradually the air grew cooler as we rose above the plains—most refreshing after the scorching heat in which I had breakfasted. We saw various coffee plantations, until the low-land vegetation gave place to more European-looking trees—the first I had seen for a very long time; and at last we were six thousand feet above the sea-level, and entered the out-skirts of the upland town of Coonor, having done the nine or ten miles from the plains in three hours, which was not bad considering the precipitous nature of the ascent.

The next morning, when I rose early and threw open my bedroom window, the fresh air was so enchantingly soft and cool, that it was difficult to think it was India, and not England in May. Truly, amongst all those things which most of us enjoy every day and are rarely thankful for at home, stands fresh air. To me, newly from the Annamullies, where the stuff we breathed was a nauseous compound of decayed vegetation and carbonic acid gas, it was indescribably refreshing. Then, too, everything looked neat and English,—the pretty villas rising one above another up the side of

the church-crowned hill, the road with willow-like *Eucalyptus globulus* on either side, and horses—not humped cattle—munching the short grass of the banks. Even the flowers were English, and as I drank in their sweet scent the picture was made complete by a bright little English girl coming down the road with her father, her arms full of flowers and convolvuli, the spoils of an early morning walk, and her yellow hair floating on the wind, while she laughed and talked and looked so beautiful I felt proud to be her countryman.

Then came a hasty breakfast, and a delightful ride over an undulating road for twelve miles into Ootacamund. It was so pleasant, in fact, that my "tat" was allowed to walk the whole way, and the fresh air entered my fever-shrunk veins and exhilarated me in a wonderful manner. Certainly it is a beautiful region. The road winds along the side of steep hills, now grass-covered and swelling with as smooth and even undulations as the Marlborough Downs, and like them carpeted with close green grass, and then, perhaps, changing for a time to high rocky hills and richly coloured precipices, nourishing a scanty growth of low

bushes and tufts of the common bracken, with numerous subalpine flowers and bright lichens clinging amongst the rough disjointed stones. For the greater part of the way the road overhangs a wide valley, where one rubs one's eyes and wonders to see waving fields of yellow barley in real hedge-enclosed English fields. Perhaps the crops were not very heavy, but they delighted me considerably; and so unlike the usual Indian scenery was it, that with astonishment I saw brown-skinned children frightening away the birds from the ripe corn, or native beggars sitting at the path-side. But undoubtedly the most striking objects were the hedges of geraniums and roses, miles long, and as high as the head of a tall man. Every one who has read of the Neilgherries has heard of those beautiful hedgerows, but they must be seen to be appreciated. How and why these two English-looking plants came to flourish here to such an extent, it is difficult to say. Both were natives of Persia before they were taken to Europe, and perhaps here they have found again a soil and climate much like their old home in the Persian uplands. At all events, they thrive wonderfully. The roses are not the

five-petalled English wild rose, but a pink many-petalled variety, and the geraniums show two or three shades of bright red, with such stems as would not do discredit to a stout bush. Thus, when the two, both in full bloom, combine together and fringe the road as far as the eye can see, or frame in the fields of ripe barley, the sight is altogether novel and delightful.

This charming scenery continues right up to the outskirts of Ootacamund, and then two or three varieties of coniferous trees are met with; for the elevation is now some eight thousand feet above the sea, and at certain seasons, in the early morning, the grass is even covered thickly with hoarfrost on these open downs.

The town itself is a curious place, less like a town than any other I know of as far as the English quarters are concerned, owing to the villas and bungalows being scattered about at haphazard, each in their own compounds, and generally separated from their nearest neighbours by a tract of grass or rocky ground. There are good flat roads in plenty in every direction, but streets nowhere. Government House stands in haughty solitude on top of a green hillock of rising ground, and close by, on another small

hill, is the English church, with the rather handsome Library and Assembly Rooms. Then the main road turns to the right and leads along the face of the ridge, past the "Ooty" Club, and finally lands one full in front of Sylk's Hotel, which is the most central hostelry in the place, and where I had previously made up my mind to stay for a time.

Of course, every one knows what an Indian hotel is like—a flat, one-storied building, all windows and doors, with very white walls and bright sunblinds, no stairs anywhere, but plenty of "boys" lying about on the doorsteps and in the passages. "Sylk's," however, was rather more imposing to look at than many in Mofussil towns, but you had to pay well for living in so smart a place.

I soon settled down with a comfortable sitting-room, bedroom, and bath-room opening into each other in the "bachelor's quarters," and the board and lodging with this accommodation was fixed at Rs. 200 per month.

The first night was undoubtedly lonely, for I was the only inhabitant of this wing of the building. Dinner over, I went to my room and fell to brooding by the wood fire, which the

chilly evening and my own feeble state of heath rendered very acceptable. Strange as it may seem, the loneliness here in an English settlement was greater than the solitude of the jungles; for there, at least, I had a few companions, and my friends the coolies knew me, but here I was among white people and yet absolutely alone! No one knew my name, or where I had come from, or where I was going. Had I crossed the Styx that night, it would have given the authorities a lot of work to find out my nearest friends—if they had ever succeeded.

However, a night's sleep set me up, and the next day after my arrival I placed myself in the hands of Surgeon-Major F——, who came over to the hotel and made himself acquainted with my case. He expressed great surprise at the condition to which the jungle leeches and fever had reduced me, and gave his opinion that my departure from the Annamullies had not been a day too soon. When I came to take his advice about returning to the jungles, he said he would strongly advise me not to think of it, and could not possibly give me permission to return, either there or to the plains, for three or four months. This was very awkward; but

when I came to think over it, I was reluctantly compelled to admit Dr. F——'s wisdom, and there seemed no other way out of the difficulty. Eventually I came to the conclusion that four months might as well be spent in England as at "Ooty," and after considering the subject from all sides, and communicating with the coffee estate, I made up my mind to return to Europe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

Ootacamund is really a very pleasant place, amidst beautiful scenery, and with a delightful climate for the greater part of the year. The mornings are indescribably fresh and pleasant in September, and the early riser throws open his window and, as he inhales the sweet air, his eyes wander over the great undulating Neilgherry plateau, extending from the very town itself far away over a long succession of grassy curves, broken by scattered sholas, or patches of brushwood, with tumbled fragments of old rocks, to the distant mountains which form the buttresses of the uplands, and are themselves, under the changing lights of sun and cloud, wonderfully charming. Perhaps the best view of all is from the Library, looking

north-east, where the hills rise up step by step, in even tiers of tree-clad slopes, to the highermost summits. But one can hardly look in any direction without being pleased, and the town of white houses dotted over the green expanse and broken up by clumps of trees always shows fresh and cheerful.

Many of these trees, by the way, are Australian, and have been imported over here and very successfully acclimatized. There is a very pretty acacia, which was in full bloom when I arrived, quite loaded with pale yellow blossoms hanging in little clusters from every twig. The *Eucalyptus globulus* is also common, and though not particularly graceful, is a fast grower, and supposed to possess wonderful anti-fever properties. There are also oaks and willows, besides orange trees and limes, and a host of others, which look better growing than their long Latin names would on paper.

The smaller plants are also interesting and varied. The blue *Strobilanthus* blooms everywhere in profusion, and nettles and many English flowers give the lanes and banks quite the look of a Devonshire country road. A curious thing is that the whole place is overrun with

Scotch whins and French immortelles, which have probably come from the churchyards; for, alas! many sick Europeans go up to Ootacamund to die, and the cemetery was very full. That strange plant, the amaranthus, which grows up dead, and is withered and dry before it has reached its prime, is especially frequent in the neighbourhood of the town, and affords a striking example of the accidental introduction of a plant into a new neighbourhood. A really good and comprehensive work on the botany of the British-Indian Empire is much needed, for so many foreign plants are being introduced by the great increase of commerce, that it will soon be impossible to tell what is indigenous and what is not. The Portuguese alone introduced some scores, and it would be difficult to say how many the English have imported. Shortly after my arrival at Sylk's Hotel, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Dr. King, of Calcutta, the Government botanist, who was collecting materials for such a work, and he showed me many interesting new plants which his native collectors daily brought in. In fact, we were the only inhabitants of our wing of the building

for a considerable time, and, dining and living together, I had a very favourable opportunity of picking up some slight knowledge of the botanical riches of the Neilgherries.

Neither in the way of society is "Ooty" deficient, and when the Governor-Bahadur and the Madras officials are "on the hills," there are plenty of parties and tumashas every week. There is a capital polo-ground, where many good games are played by officers and civilians before "store of ladies," whose presence leads to fiercely contested struggles and total disregard of wounds. There is also a concert-room, where auctions are held of the guns and properties of gentlemen "going home," and bazaars, where the English ladies hold stalls for charitable purposes, and sell cheroots to the gentlemen—five rupees each, and eight rupees "if they bite the ends off." There is also some good mixed shooting in the neighbourhood, chiefly of snipe, duck, woodcock, and plenty of hares; while if the sportsman goes beyond the limits of the town and up into the neighbouring hills, there is no knowing what he may not meet.

Sometimes the shooting is too "mixed."

Only the other day a party of gentlemen were out snipe shooting about half a mile from the back of Sylk's Hotel, and while the beaters were going through a shola, a fine ten-foot tiger came quietly out a few yards from one of the Englishmen. Being an old shikaree, he knew what to do, and, quietly substituting ball cartridges for the snipe-shot, killed the tiger with a single shot as it was staring at him. When out shooting on these hills, one should always be prepared for emergencies such as this.

Amongst the sporting capabilities of the place are those which the lively hill jackals give for hunting; and a pack of dogs is kept—I had almost written for their amusement; but although the hounds are undoubtedly maintained for the enjoyment of the English residents, they kill so seldom, owing to the swiftness and cunning of their tawny-skinned quarry, that really it is very doubtful if the jackals mind being hunted very much.

The first meet of the season took place soon after my arrival, and I witnessed a very good morning's sport, though, *sub rosâ*, it was a thing strictly forbidden by my good doctor. It came about in this way. The solitude of the

"bachelor's quarters" had been broken by the arrival of two or three gentlemen, and amongst them a chik-doree, like myself, on the way to a distant estate, who brought with him a host of luggage and servants, and two grey "tats," on one of which he offered me a mount. Feeble as I felt, I was yet totally unable to refuse; and the next morning, as the dawn was breaking over the distant hills, and half the country lay in shadow and half in the faint grey light, we turned out, swallowed some hot coffee, put biscuits into our pockets, and joined the hounds and red-coated huntsmen, all in pucka get up, as they came through the compound from the kennels on the hillside above. It was so cold that it was hardly possible to feel the reins at first, until we were warmed; nevertheless, we were met by several plucky ladies and many gentlemen, and half an hour's ride brought us out into the open beyond the town, where we were soon hard at work.

As usual, the difficulty was not to find a jackal, but to keep the dogs together; for they sprang up on every side, and there seemed to be one behind every heap of stones. It was a treat to see the ladies riding amongst the fore-

most, with their hands down and heads up, and obviously enjoying it thoroughly; neither did the occasional stone walls or banks of peat turn them from the straight course, and it was plain they had not forgotten the lessons learnt in far-away English fields. I saw one or two saddles emptied in crossing a nullah, but without any serious consequences, and in a short time the field got scattered far and wide, the jackals springing up every now and then under the dog's noses, until it was impossible to keep them in a pack any longer. In a little time I found myself quite alone, with one dog and a wise old jackal ahead of us. As I looked at him and noticed the easy slinging trot at which he was going, though we were doing almost our best, I had to confess to myself that it was very doubtful if I should carry home his brush with me that morning. He was clearly not in a hurry, and took us up and down and round about for half an hour or more, at one time leading the way through a shola, where I had great difficulty in keeping the hound in view, then down a steep hillside across a nullah, over a wall, through a rose hedge, and up the other side, where I was obliged to jump off and lead

the "tat" up, as the incline and heavy dew on the grass made it more than he could do to keep his footing. But we would put the pace on over the next bit of level, and catch up our two friends, the jackal still a few yards ahead and going at a comfortable canter, while the hound was flying signals of distress and obviously doing all he knew. At last the jackal seemed to think it was getting tedious, or that he had given enough sport for the morning; anyhow, he shook himself together, and, lying down to his work, put on a pace which in five short minutes fairly ran his pursuers out of breath, and left them looking very foolish on the slope of a hill, as his tawny form was disappearing over the sky-line.

This is how we hunt the jackal at "Ooty;" but though my particular little hunt had not been successful, it was amusing, and had given me a good appetite for breakfast when the hotel was eventually reached after a long ride home. I need hardly add that when Dr. F—— heard of my having been out, I got the reproof I well deserved, and paid the forfeit by being very much knocked up for several days after.

But it was as tedious to be ill as to speak of

it, and especially distasteful to me in a new district where there was much to be seen and done. Not being permitted to walk more than half a mile at a time, it was impossible to explore the country round about; I had to look on at the polo as though I were an old Greenwich pensioner; tennis was forbidden, though the court was under my very windows; and the great Marcoorti peak, 8400 feet high, frowned down on me all day long, and tempted me vainly to climb it.

Sometimes I wandered to the Botanical Gardens, very pretty and neat, but somehow affected with that uncomfortable formality which always hangs about British public gardens—a sense of too much order, and of being continually requested not to walk on the grass or smoke in the conservatories, oppresses the visitor. Still they were very well kept and richly stocked with plants of various zones of temperature. Here one might see the *Eucalyptus pendula*, a tree which exudes a thick gum with a strong smell of peppermint; besides many others,—lovely camellias growing in the open air, and a daisy-like Australian *Erigeron*. The birds also had an English look, wagtails running

about near the ponds, finches in the thickets, and a blackbird (*Merula simillima*), almost the exact prototype of the British species, feeding on the lawns.

The handsome new Library deserves and obtains a large share of patronage from the English residents. There one sees all the latest telegrams from England and Europe posted up on the doors, as might be said hot from the journey half round the world, and at tiffin-time we know in this way all that those at home knew while they read their morning papers. Of books in the shelves upstairs there were some six thousand, and works amongst them in every branch of literature, science, and art, though the novels show, perhaps, most signs of wear and tear, and from the way in which they are "dog's-eared" and written upon it was easy to guess that the ladies are their chief patrons. Doubtless they find it very hard to pass the hot mid-day hours, when they are perforce detained indoors, and so novel reading is perhaps less blameworthy in India than anywhere else.

This was my special haunt when the weather changed to wet, as it did some time after my arrival on the hills, and I spent many grateful days amongst the books.

Of course, messages were sent from the jungle inquiring about my health, and charging me with plenty of commissions, as I was in a civilized place. Some of my former associates wanted ammunition for guns and rifles; some, sides of bacon and hams—luxuries only to be obtained on the Neilgherries. In fact, it taxed my whole abilities to successfully carry out all the various orders.

L—— wrote to me to say the coolies on our estate were much impressed with the burning of my hut, and the suddenness with which I had vanished from the scene of my former labours. The general feeling seemed to be that I had mounted to the abodes of the blessed in the smoke of the flaming bungalow, and the coolies wanted to build a shrine and kill a chicken at it every week to appease my wandering spirit! Some of them went so far as to declare they had seen me go up through the tree-tops when the flames were at their fiercest, and the coolies on other estates, that had only heard half the story, firmly believed that the "burra-wallah" disappeared in some supernatural way.

On one occasion, too long a walk in a tremendous downpour of tropical rain round the

Ootacamund lake had brought on a return of the fever, which in my very feeble health told on me considerably, and the next day, when a little recovered, I determined to go to the doctor and take his advice. There was no carriage to be had, and as walking was out of the question, a powerful brown horse was borrowed from one of the gentlemen staying in the hotel. Climbing into the saddle with great difficulty, we started off at a very orderly walk for Church Hill. Unfortunately, just at the hotel gates was an old coolie woman talking to a gossip, and as I passed she turned round suddenly, letting the chatty in her hand fall to the ground with a loud clash. This was too much for my horse, fresh from the stables and unlimited grain; he started off as hard as he could go—luckily in the right direction—and I could no more have reduced his desperate pace than stayed a whirlwind; in fact, my whole energies were spent in remaining "on board." In this wild way we charged past some native huts, half killing some pigs and chickens, and sending the small children howling to right and left—past the Club, where the members who happened to be in the verandah must have judged my news was very

bad from the pace at which I rode over Church Hill—and eventually to the point where Dr. F——'s carriage drive joins the main road. By a great effort I turned the horse up this path, and in a moment more he had come, of his own accord, to a standstill in front of the house. Dr. F——, who had been walking in the verandah, said he was glad to see I was so much better; but I replied with a good deal of awkwardness that my errand was to say I was much worse, though it fell rather flat in face of my wild riding. In fact, it is not every one who gallops to fetch their own doctor when seriously ill.

The crows were nearly as bad up on the hills as they had been in the lowlands. They are little influenced by change of climate, and have none of the virtues usually supposed to be possessed by dwellers on mountains. When I first took up my quarters at "Sylk's," I thought it would be pleasant to have some pets of some sort or other; and there being nothing else handy, I made some friendly advances to the crows, feeding them occasionally with bread and scraps. But the result was anything except satisfactory, for in two days at most the news

of my philanthropy seemed to have spread to the whole corvine population of the town; and no sooner did I venture outside the verandah than all the crows on the roof-ridge began cawing, and the chorus was taken up far and wide, till the trees in the compound rapidly filled with crows, all croaking at the top of their voices and following me about; so that at last I was heartily ashamed of them. Ceasing to feed them was of no use; I had earned a character for benevolence which was not to be shaken off easily, and my popularity was overwhelming amongst my black friends. At last they became so troublesome and unruly that something had to be done; so, after trying to lower myself in their good opinions by giving them bread soaked in brandy, which only made the noise worse, I sent down to Madras for a small blow-tube, firing a small charge of powder and a swan-shot. My popularity entirely disappeared the day it arrived; and after I had upset two or three birds, and taken some feathers out of the tail of another, they saw that I had changed my mind about petting crows.

One makes strange friends at these Indian

hotels, the majority pleasant, but some few very much the reverse. However, the pleasant ones *are* much the most numerous, and when Englishmen meet in India they "fraternize" more readily than in perhaps any other country, not even excepting "home," which is a result very likely of nearly every one in the country being on much the same social footing, since, of course, poor or low-class English are very rarely seen "up country," and seldom even in the big towns. The quickness with which friendships are made is astonishing. For instance, the silence of the "bachelors' quarters" was broken one day by the arrival of a Mr. H. R——, a barrister of Calcutta, coming up to the Neilgherries for a month's shooting, with tents, ponies, and a number of servants, with which the verandah was soon littered. The request for the loan of a pocket-knife was sufficient to introduce us; half an hour later, we were hard at work relating shooting adventures, and before we parted for the night Mr. R—— had taken me by the button-hole, and said, "Look here! you can do something for me. I am going away at daybreak tomorrow with the greater part of my baggage

and the tents, and may not be back for two or three weeks. But there are two portmanteaus, full of books and clothes and so on, which I do not want to take with me. Here are my keys. If you will permit those portmanteaus to be placed in your room, and will open them and send me any little things I may write for from time to time, you will place me under an obligation to you." Of course, I expressed my pleasure at being of any use to him, and subsequently received several very interesting accounts of his doings and tent-life. I merely mention this to show how rapidly friendships grow up when strangers have mutual ideas and thoughts.

But even hotel life at "Ooty" is not without its drawbacks. The charges are very high, and the food not particularly good, though the chief grumblers on that score were the old officers, who make a point of grumbling at anything and everything, and will probably grumble at the fit of their wings in heaven when they some day get them. Thus it took little more than a month to tire me of the town and the hills. I had visited the curious little village of the Todas, or aboriginal inhabitants, had seen the

Mussulman burying ground with its silent city of little white-domed graves, and "done" everything in the near neighbourhood which was to be seen, and at last received, with great satisfaction, the doctor's permission to go down to Coonor, on the way to Madras, whence to take steamer home.

Leave-taking is always mournful, and a thing to which no one gets accustomed; so, after all, I felt really sorry to quit the many friends I had picked up. But the parting was soon over, and by half-past seven one bright morning I had taken my place in the mail tonga, with my few belongings at my feet; and with a parting shake of the hands of those who had come to see me off, the driver blew a blast on his horn, and away we went down the road towards Coonor.

I had chosen the tonga dak because it is a much faster mode of travelling than by private carriage, and the mail cart being very much like an Irish jaunting-car, one gets more fresh air and a better view of the scenery. The pace was certainly not disappointing. Our first pair of horses were young and fresh, and, by way of commencement, ran the pole into a high earth

bank before we had gone many yards. Freeing ourselves, we dashed down the hill at a gallop, the driver occasionally blowing lively blasts on his trumpet, which brought every one out to stare at us, until we had threaded the winding roads of the outskirts of the town, by some wonderful chance without knocking down any of the old men and women, who would keep in the centre of the road in spite of all the warning we gave them. Here we were free of the town, and began to descend rapidly. Soon a toll-bar came in sight, and a loud blast on the horn brought out the man, who flew to the gate and opened it just as we charged down, but it certainly seemed that there were not six inches between our wheel and the gatepost as we passed. However, the driver was expert and experienced; he kept both horses carefully in hand, and by his side was a powerful brake, to be used on the steeper declines, and an arrangement of screws and levers by which the pole could be raised or lowered at will, according to whether we were going up or down hill. So, feeling an able pilot was at the helm, I was free to enjoy the really beautiful scenery and the fresh morning air. In places the view was

like the wildest parts of the Scotch moorlands, with green swampy valleys and small burns trickling down the hillsides; in others, precipitous rocks towered above the road, like the Norwegian fjelds; and elsewhere were wide-spreading hollows, with fields of barley and little wayside huts amongst the geraniums and roses.

At one of these little changing-houses we pulled up and got fresh horses, and then continued the rapid descent again. Many times it seemed that we must inevitably come into collision with some of the numerous country carts which were toiling up to Ootacamund with lowland produce in charge of sleepy drivers, who would only wake up just as we were upon them, and then shout to us to stop, or pull the tails of their cattle, who were at least as sleepy as their masters. Of course, we did not stop, but shot by as best we could. On one of these occasions a bandy was passed, out of which a long pole was projecting. We cleared the cart, but the stick caught in the sheet of canvas placed across the side of the dak, scarcely more than a foot from my head, and tore it from side to side. But we never

slackened speed for a moment, except to change horses again and for the last time, and then did the remaining stage into Coonor, sweeping round the sharp curves of the road, and close to the very brink of deep nullahs, sometimes passing a few sons of the Celestial Empire boring holes in the rocks with an iron jumper for blasting purposes, and by some very beautiful nooks of tropical vegetation, with bright birds and butterflies on the wing amongst the trees and shrubs. Finally, we pulled up opposite the post-office of the ghaut town.

The two best hotels are both on top of a high ridge, which necessitates a long climb to reach them; but the exertion is repaid by the freshness of the air and the beauty of the scenery. The native town and bazaars are seen down below in the hollow, and a long succession of undulating ridges beyond. The "Camel's Hump" mountain, in the distance, rises some ten thousand feet above the sea, and occasional glimpses open of the flat Madras plains far away to the southward.

In fact, I think this neighbourhood is much superior to Ootacamund, especially in botanical riches, as being just at the head of the ghaut,

and more than a thousand feet lower than that town, the vegetation includes many tropical forms of great beauty, besides European plants and trees. There are some really noble oak trees, which would be a credit to any English wood, growing side by side with the Australian *Eucalyptus globulus*, which, during the few years since they were first planted, have attained great height and proportions. The roses bloom as plentiful as ever, and the heliotrope forms great hedges and envelops small buildings in clouds of its pale-blue, sweet-scented flowers and leaves. There are also lovely orange gardens on the hillsides, reminding one of the south of France and the islands of the Mediterranean; while, besides all these natural charms, there is plenty of agreeable society, and the arrangements of Grey's Hotel, where I stayed, were everything that could be desired in the way of comfort and convenience.

Two or three days' rest at this pleasant town somewhat accustomed me to a heat greater than that of "Ooty;" and, though a rather heavy recurrence of fever threw me back, I was able to pay my bill early on the morning of the 15th, and, hurrying down the hill, to secure a

seat in the mail cart when it arrived from inland.

The descent was made by the new road, not the bridle-track by which I had come up, though the scenery was much the same; the most striking thing being the wide views we occasionally obtained of the far-spreading plains below, seeming as even as a billiard table, with a few little mound-like eminences scattered here and there, looking so out of place amid the surrounding levels that it was difficult to think they were not human works.

We passed many English soldiers with nets and boxes, reaping a rich harvest amongst the bright butterflies and bees of the wayside jungles, which grew hotter and hotter at every turn of the road.

At last the heat again grew wellnigh intolerable, for mid-day found us only half-way down the ghauts, and the blazing sun overhead, and the clouds of choking white dust raised by the native carts which we passed, made my eyes and throat smart till I could hardly draw my breath. The guide-books say the road is an excellent one, and so it is as far as concerns the engineering skill which

made it; but the surface in the dry weather is very shifting, and the natives in charge of the upward-bound bandies are constantly stopping and placing stones under the wheels of their carts while they rest. These they never think of removing when they go on, and consequently we were continually going over these obstructions with an amount of jolting which, with the thermometer at 100°, was more painful than amusing. The driver, a tall, white-clad Musulman, was continually saying to me, "Now, sahib, hold tight;" and then we would give a fearful plunge, which would send the mail-bags all down into one corner, and would have undoubtedly "unshipped" us had we not been prepared.

However, the longest road must come to an end, and by 2 p.m. we reached the lowlands, where everything looked terribly dry and withered under the fierce sun. Half an hour's gallop over the blinding white road brought us to Metapolliam, hot, tired, and dusty, but just in time to catch the mail train to Madras, which was standing with steam up, impatiently waiting for the letter-bags.

There is nothing to record of interest for

the remainder of the journey, but nearly my whole night was spent at the open carriage window, watching the moonlit country as we flew along, and the bright white reflections and deep shadows of the little villages and temples dotted over the land. Never shall I forget, amid all my memories in India, the endless novelty and beauty of the open country under the lovely moonbeams, and the splendid day-breaks.

At 6 a.m. we rattled into the station of Madras—just twenty-four hours after leaving Coonor, on the summit of the Neilgherries—and I immediately took a fly and hurried to the office of the British India Steam Navigation Company, as one of their ships was advertised to sail on the 16th at midday. But I might have spared myself so much haste, for it was only to learn that the steamer had been detained in the Hooghly, and was expected "to-morrow." By a curious coincidence, when I came to inquire what ship was expected, it turned out to be the *Almora*, my old sea friend; so, securing a berth in her, I took my way to an hotel facing the beach, and spent a decidedly hot and close night in the open verandah, tormented by mosquitoes.

There is little more to be said. I watched the horizon of the sea all the morning hours of the following day, and at last my patience was rewarded by a thin line of smoke to the northward. It grew and grew rapidly; at first the funnels and masts, and then the hull, of the big ship coming into sight, and in an hour more the *Almora* lay at anchor off the pier. That night we were off the Coromandel coast; the next day, in the pearl and coral waters of Ceylon; and a month afterwards our anchor rattled down off Gravesend Pier.

Hic longæ finis chartæque viæque.

THE END.

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